■ World / A9

Mosul bomb attack kills 18 GIs, 4 Iraqis

■ Business / B1

Neda says economy grew 6.1% in 2004

■ Metro / A17

Comics, T-shirts, pins, other FPJ souvenirs still bestsellers

■ News / A2

Archbishop Rosales says Christmas whispering to us 'after tempest, sorrow are gone'

■ BYLINE INQUIRER

Mga bagong paputok: Mura, di-ligtas—at smuggled!

Ngayong alas-10 ng gabi, sa ABC

German firm accuses gov't of breaking law on Naia 3

THE GERMAN firm Fraport AG, which owns 30 percent of the consortium that built the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 (Naia 3), accused the government yesterday of breaking the law when it expropriated the terminal on Tuesday.

"Fraport considers the action of the Philippine government a further flagrant breach of

GERMAN/ A6

website: www.inq7.net

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Thursday, December 23, 2004 ★★ 50 pages / 5 sections / Vol. 20 / No. 15 P18

Legions see last FPJ blockbuster

JOAN BONDOC

'This is the real voters' protest, GMA take note'

By Volt Contreras, Edson C. Tandoc Jr. Christian V. Esguerra and Tina Santos

EVEN the bravest of them all had her limits.

Looking like a calm center in the midst of pandemonium, actress Susan Roces could only take so much and gave way to her tears. Leaning over the maroon coffin, she gave Fernando Poe Jr. a last kiss, ending a high drama that had gripped the nation for 10 days.

A fellow actor may have summed it all up in a phrase, likening the huge wake and yesterday's funeral to a box office smash "unparalleled in [Philippine movie] history."

By many accounts, the multitude that carried the movie king from the Sto. Domingo Church to his grave at Manila's North Cemetery failed to match the mammoth crowds estimated at more than one million which buried assassinated opposition leader Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino in 1983.

But it was large enough to worry President Macapagal-Arroyo's security force, which readied blocking forces in case hotheads at yesterday's funeral goaded the marchers toward Malacañang Palace.

Seeing the multitude of mourners, human rights lawyer Rene Saguisag said: "This is a powerful political statement. This is the real election protest, not the one in the Supreme Court. The outpouring is just incredible."

"GMA should learn a thing or two from this," he added.

Surrounded by family and relatives who were mostly in white, Roces stood out in her black outfit, squinting in the morning sun as Fr. Sonny Ramirez performed final funeral rites for Poe, who

LEGIONS/ A8

VAL HANDUMON

THE BRAVE WOMEN in FPJ's life and death, his widow Susan Roces and daughter Grace watch his casket disappear inside the tomb. (At right) A box-office sensation: An unbroken line of mourners pack España Boulevard on the way to Manila's North Cemetery. *(More photos on Pages A3 and A7.)*

Poe's memory, face live on in death mask

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr. and PDI Research

HIS MEMORY—and his face—will live on.

Minutes before yesterday's pre-dawn necrological Mass for movie icon Fernando Poe Jr., sculptor Napoleon V. Abueva took a mold of Poe's face, similar to what was done to the martyred Ninoy Aquino more than two decades ago.

With the mold, the face of the legendary King of Philippine movies will be immortalized in a "death mask" by no less than the National Artist.

"I just thought about it on the last day (of the wake). The family gave me permission," Abueva told the INQUIRER.

The mold can be used in the future in case the Poe family decides to have a portrait of the actor's face, said a member of the organizing committee for Poe's, adding the mold would also be useful in

POE'S MEMORY/ A8

Fan loses slippers, walks 6.5 km barefoot

REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

THE MOOD at yesterday's funeral march for Fernando Poe Jr. was almost festive.

Ex-Sen. Tessie Aquino-Oreta, San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito and Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay served as cheerleaders, egging the mourners to sing "Gloria Labandera."

Somewhere on España Boulevard in Manila, someone began singing the ditty deriding President Macapagal-Arroyo. Within seconds the amused crowd had taken it up and continued singing it throughout the march, changing a word or two—*mandaraya* (cheat) or *magnanakaw* (thief) for *labandera* (washerwoman).

But the singing was more playful than angry, and the ones singing appeared hugely entertained.

* * *

There was a continuous rain of

FAN LOSES/ A6

2 funerals, one message: Dawn of new life

By Michael Lim Ubac, Luige A. del Puerto and Leila B. Salaverria

TWO FUNERALS, one message.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. yesterday said that with the funeral of Fernando Poe Jr., he could not help but remember that of opposition leader Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr. in 1983.

Pimentel was awed by the sea of supporters, fans and friends that joined the funeral march for the man popularly known as "FPJ," but said the numbers were beyond compare.

2 FUNERALS/ A8

DOJ bares plot to oust Gloria, install Susan, junta

By Philip C. Tubeza Alcuin Papa and Christine O. Avendaño

A PLOT to use the funeral of actor Fernando Poe Jr. to overthrow the administration and replace it with a civilian-military junta, with Poe's widow Susan Roces as a figurehead, was disclosed yesterday morning by Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez.

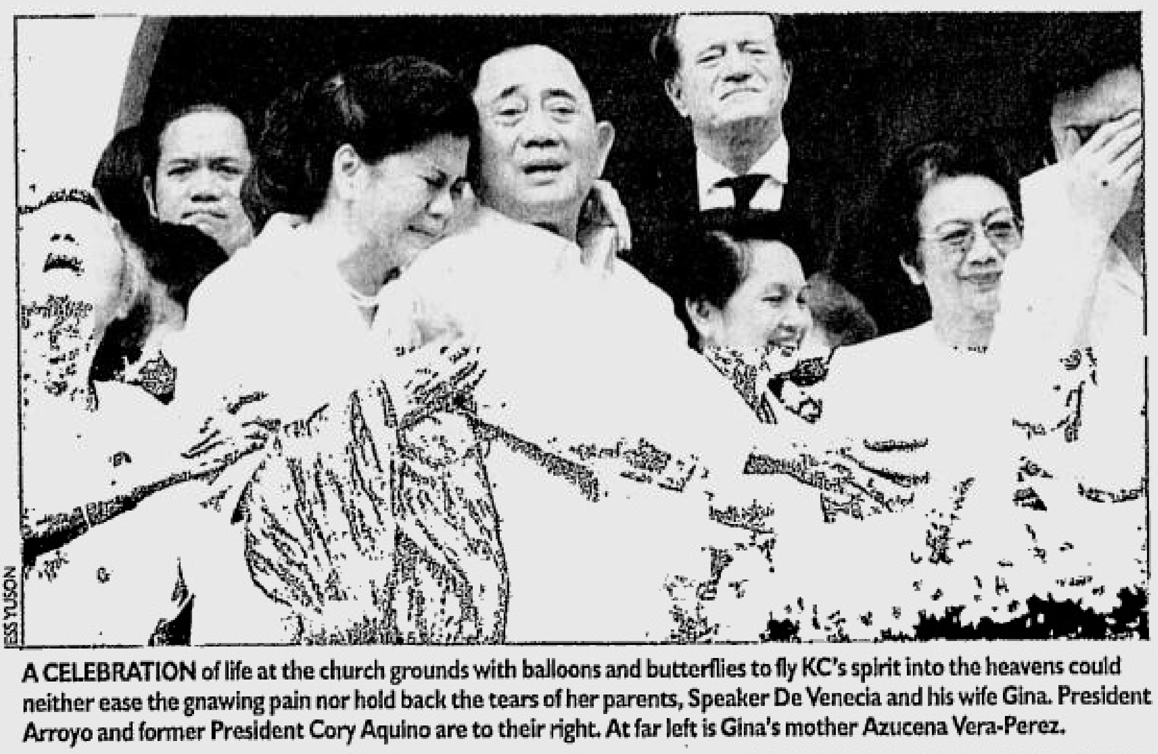
Gonzalez warned that the 48 hours after the burial was "critical" because the alleged conspiracy for an "Edsa-type" uprising was still "evolving.'"

He said the government found the plot credible after intelligence operatives intercepted four conversations between an Army colonel and an opposition lawyer that laid out the alleged plan to oust President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"It is credible because it involves electronic intercepts and were very specific as to the plans. I myself have heard (the intercepts) ... (but) GMA is confident that she can stave off this crisis," Gonzalez said.

The threat, if there was any, appeared to have passed by late after-

DOJ/ A7



JESS YUSON

A CELEBRATION of life at the church grounds with balloons and butterflies to fly KC's spirit into the heavens could neither ease the gnawing pain nor hold back the tears of her parents, Speaker De Venecia and his wife Gina. President Arroyo and former President Cory Aquino are to their right. At far left is Gina's mother Azucena Vera-Perez.

KC soars on wings of joy, laughter, tears

By Carlito Pablo, Juliet Labog-Javellana, Margaux C. Ortiz and Cynthia D. Balana

FOR FIVE days, Gina Vera Perez de Venecia like Susan Roces was a pillar of strength for the family grieving over the loss of its youngest daughter Ma. Kristina Casimira or KC.

Yesterday at the Requiem Mass, Gina was overcome by sorrow and sobbed for several minutes, tightly embracing President Macapagal-Arroyo who led the who's who in Philippine politics and the diplomatic corps in condoling with the family.

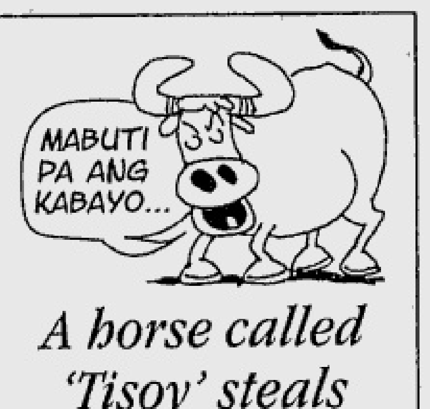
The two mothers were later joined in a communal embrace by KC's elder brothers Philip and Christopher, and Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr.

As Gina cried her heart out, Lea Salonga's soulful voice filled the church with some of the songs KC loved during her brief lifetime.

KC, youngest child of the De Venecias, died in a Dec. 16 fire that gutted the family home in Dasmariñas Village.

Gina again shed tears after the Mass held at the Santuario de

KC SOARS/ A5



MABUTI PA ANG KABAYO...

A horse called 'Tisoy' steals viewers' hearts

By Luige A. del Puerto and Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

AND THE award for most disciplined mourner in the FPJ funeral march goes to ... "Tisoy" the horse

A HORSE/ A6

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northern and Eastern Luzon, Eastern Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers becoming frequent over eastern sections of Visayas and Mindanao. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy skies.
SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/12/23/04

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Rosales: God's love Christmas focus

ROSALES

By Blanche S. Rivera

AS TIMES prove harder to mean a "Merry Christmas" greeting, the Catholic Church yesterday urged people to derive their joy and peace from the love of Jesus Christ, instead of the traditional material gifts.

In his message to the faithful, Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales admitted that the recent natural calamities, economic hardships and political concerns in the country had made it harder for the Filipinos to enjoy the festivities that usually mark Christmas season in the Philippines.

"Christmas is always our recalling of God's love . . . But its celebration is influenced yearly by the prevailing spiritual, economic, social and political conditions in the country. Natural calamities, escalating poverty, personal and regional tragedies influence the mood of celebration like what we experience today," Rosales said.

"Indeed we find ourselves searching for pockets of joy in our lives or shift in our measure and kind of happiness in order to give meaning to our greeting of 'Merry Christmas,'" he said.

Rosales, who is spending his second Christmas as archbishop of the country's most influential archdiocese this year, said people should focus on God's love, expressed through the birth of Christ, to appreciate this year's celebration.

"Our search for peace will be in vain if we pin our hopes elsewhere," the prelate said.

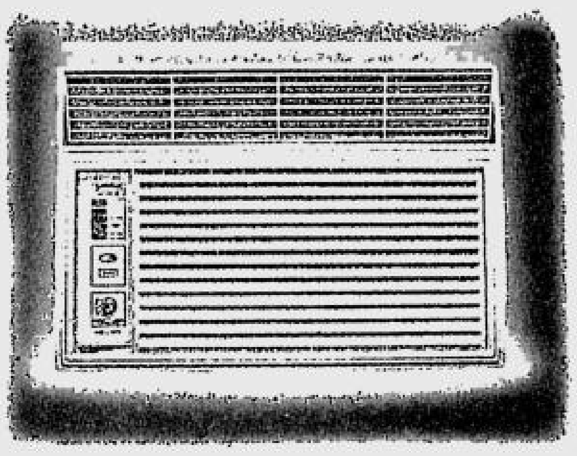
He recalled how the birth of Jesus, called the Emmanuel or God with us, fulfilled the people's longing for salvation in the early days and taught them to do good to one another as Filipinos are called now.

"These people who have been touched by God's love in Jesus are capable of bringing peace where there is conflict, of building and nurturing fraternal relationships where there is hatred, of seeking justice where there prevails the exploitation of man by man. Only love is capable of radically transforming the relationship that men maintain among themselves," Rosales said.

"There is hope when humans seek peace in the ways of Jesus. This is what Christmas is whispering to us even in the darkness and after the tempest and sorrow are gone," he said.

The archbishop is leading a development program called the "Pondo ng Pinoy," where the parishes gather 25-centavo donations to raise P10 million which will be used to finance livelihood projects of organizations working for the poor.

Alas, old friend, you have served me well, and parting is such sweet sorrow...



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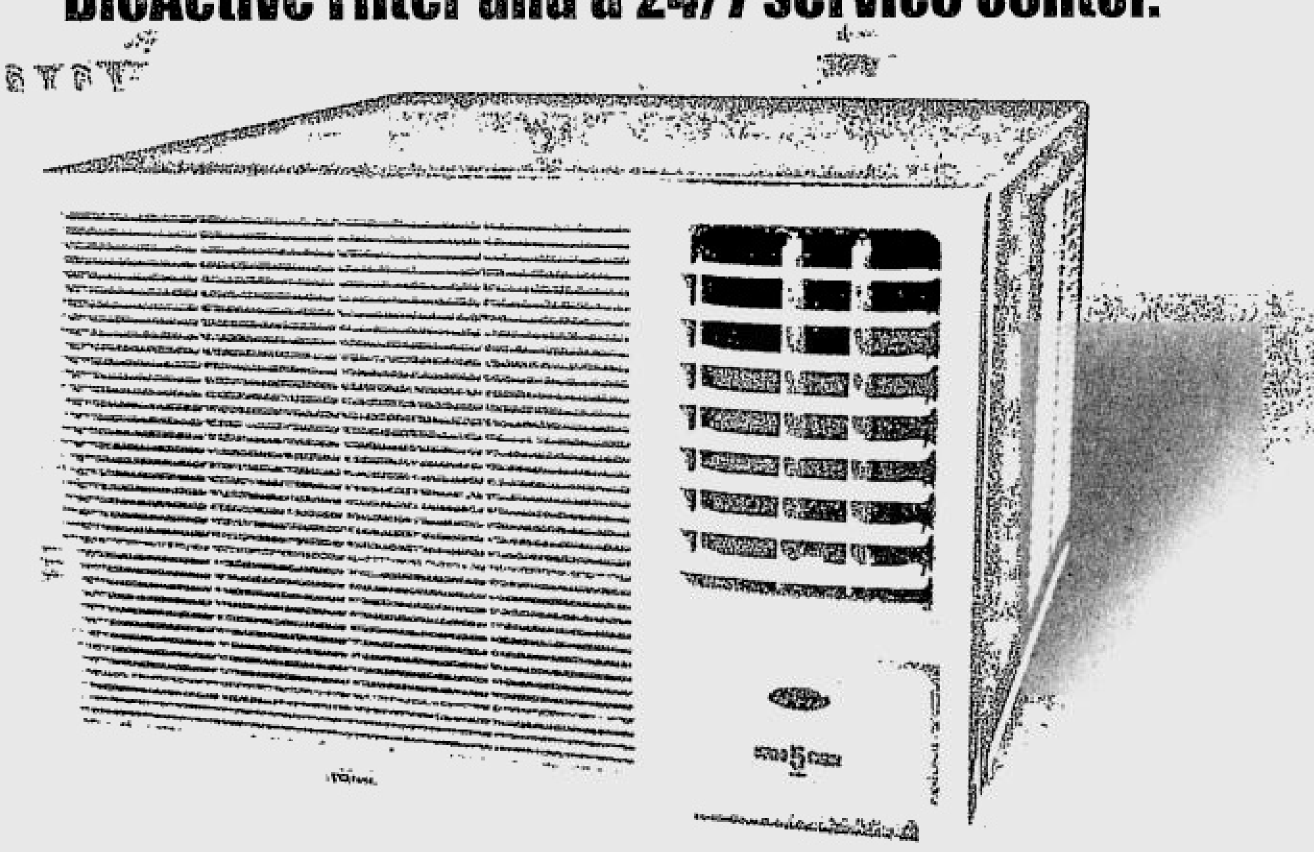

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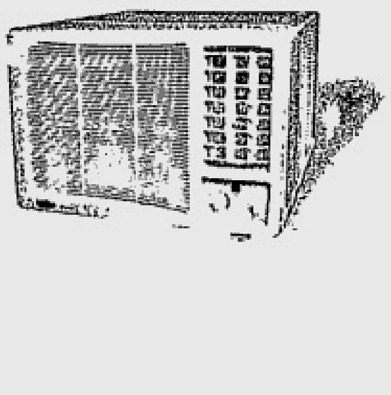

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Rebs to feast on holiday delicacies

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

LUCENA CITY—With the New People's Army's 10-day unilateral ceasefire starting midnight today, communist rebels begin preparation for the traditional *noche buena* to celebrate Christmas with families and friends.

According to Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, spokesperson of the Communist Party of the Philippines, NPA rebels put away their guns to cook their favorite native holiday delicacies like "*suman*" and "*kalamay*."

"Some of the Red fighters cook *suman* and *kalamay*. Some of them take turns in the laborious mixing of *kalamay*, while others help in the wrapping of *suman*," Rosal told the INQUIRER in a mobile phone interview.

The declaration of a truce, which ends on Jan. 2, 2005, according to Rosal, gives the communist rebels time to enjoy the holidays with their loved ones inside the guerrilla zones just like any typical Filipino community. President Macapagal-Arroyo declared a three-week ceasefire last week.

Rosal said festivities usually extend up to Dec. 26, when the CPP celebrates its founding anniversary. "There's a lot of singing. They (visitors) stay inside the zone in the comfort and security being provided by the NPA," he said.

Children inside the guerrilla zones also visit their relatives to ask for Christmas gifts, according to Rosal. "The kids also ask gifts from NPA members. If a kid greets a Red fighter with a 'Merry Christmas,' the comrade is obliged to dig into his pocket for some coins to give to the kid," he said.

But according to Rosal, despite the abundance of Christmas food and other holiday favorites, he could not help missing his mother's "*suman sa lehiya*."

"For me, it's the best *suman* in the whole Ibaan, especially if it's accompanied by hot chocolate or coffee. I really can't forget the delicious taste of my mother's *suman*. I now miss it," he said.

The Rosals hail from Ibaan town in Batangas. His mother Crispina, 91, is suffering from acute arthritis.

During the truce, some NPA members also study to strengthen their political and ideological foundation, Rosal said. Although the rebels participate in the celebration of Christmas in deference to Filipino tradition, "we could not afford to be totally complacent against the treacherous attacks of the enemy," he added.

Rosal said communist guerrillas were prepared to defend themselves if attacked by the police and the military.

He said he was sorry for government troopers because they could not be with their families to enjoy the Christmas holidays in view of the "continuous military operations even during the duration of the government-imposed ceasefire," he said.

Few know DOH seal, poll shows

EVEN as the law requiring the mandatory fortification of certain food types took effect last month, less than one-fifth of Filipino families know about the Sangkap Pinoy Seal (SPS) that indicate added mineral content in the products' ingredients.

A survey by the Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI) shows that only 16 percent of families are aware of fortified foods and what the SPS stands for.

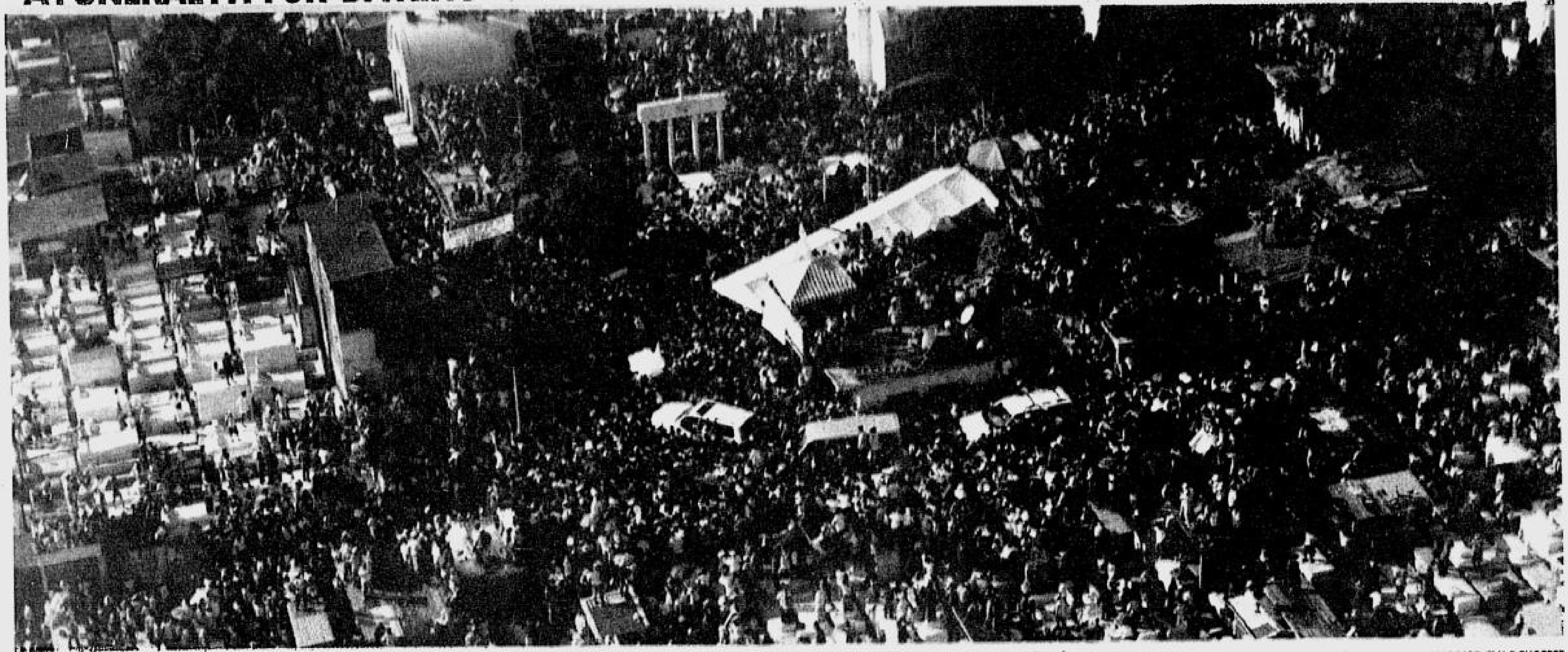
This, however, has obviously not affected their consumption of products with SPS because the same survey shows that almost all, or 99.2 percent of families, buy at least one product with the seal of approval from the Department of Health and the Bureau of Food and Drugs.

The top 10 most commonly consumed fortified foods are Tang and Eight o'Clock fruit juices, Ovaltine chocolate drink, Magic Flakes and other cereal products, Lucky Me and Payless instant noodles, snacks like Oishi, and Minola cooking oil and Papa catsup among the condiments.

"The use of these food products by more households, especially on a daily basis, gives a good boost to the partnership of government and the food industry to fight micronutrient malnutrition," the FNRI said in a statement.

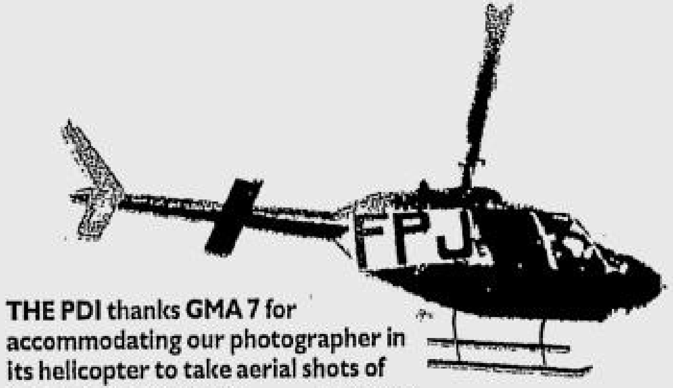
Blanche S. Rivera

A FUNERAL FIT FOR 'DA KING'



TENS of thousands disturb the graveyards and tombstones at Manila's North Cemetery as they wait for their "king" to arrive at his final destination. BOY CABRIDO/PHOTO TAKEN FROM ABOARD GMA 7 CHOPPER

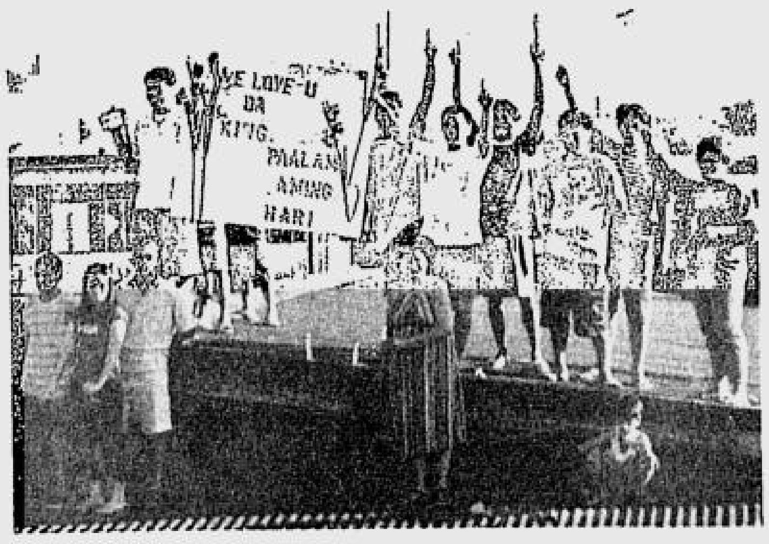
THE WIDOW finally lets go of all that is in her heart in the wee hours of Wednesday morning after the funeral Mass at the Sto. Domingo Church. RAFFY LERMA



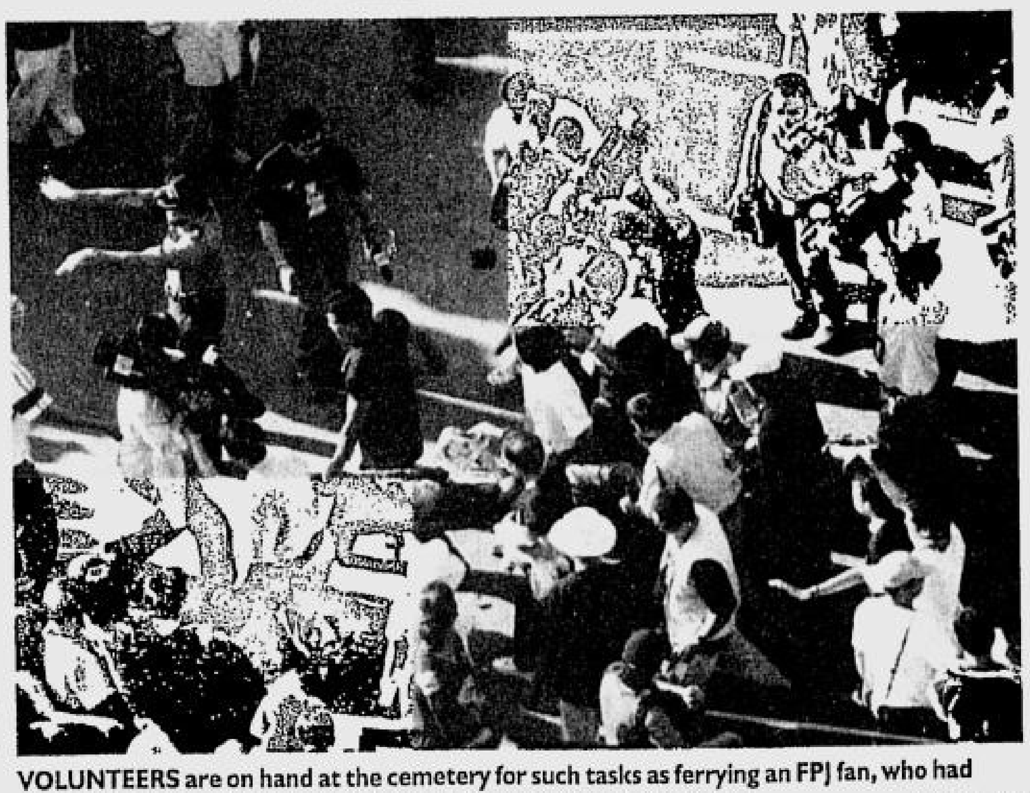
THE PDI thanks **GMA 7** for accommodating our photographer in its helicopter to take aerial shots of the funeral procession. ERIK ARAZAS

STARRING role: Erap, who got this monicker from FPJ, was roundly applauded when he arrives in church for the necrological services on Tuesday night and condoles with Susan Roces. RAFFY LERMA

WITH her relatives settling down for the long vigil at the Sto. Domingo Church grounds, a child lights a candle in memoriam. TOOTS SOBERANO



ROOM at the top: Along the funeral route, entire households climb to the roof for a better view of "Da King's" last journey. ERIK ARAZAS



VOLUNTEERS are on hand at the cemetery for such tasks as ferrying an FPJ fan, who had fainted, for first aid treatment in one of the improvised medical tents. BOY CABRIDO

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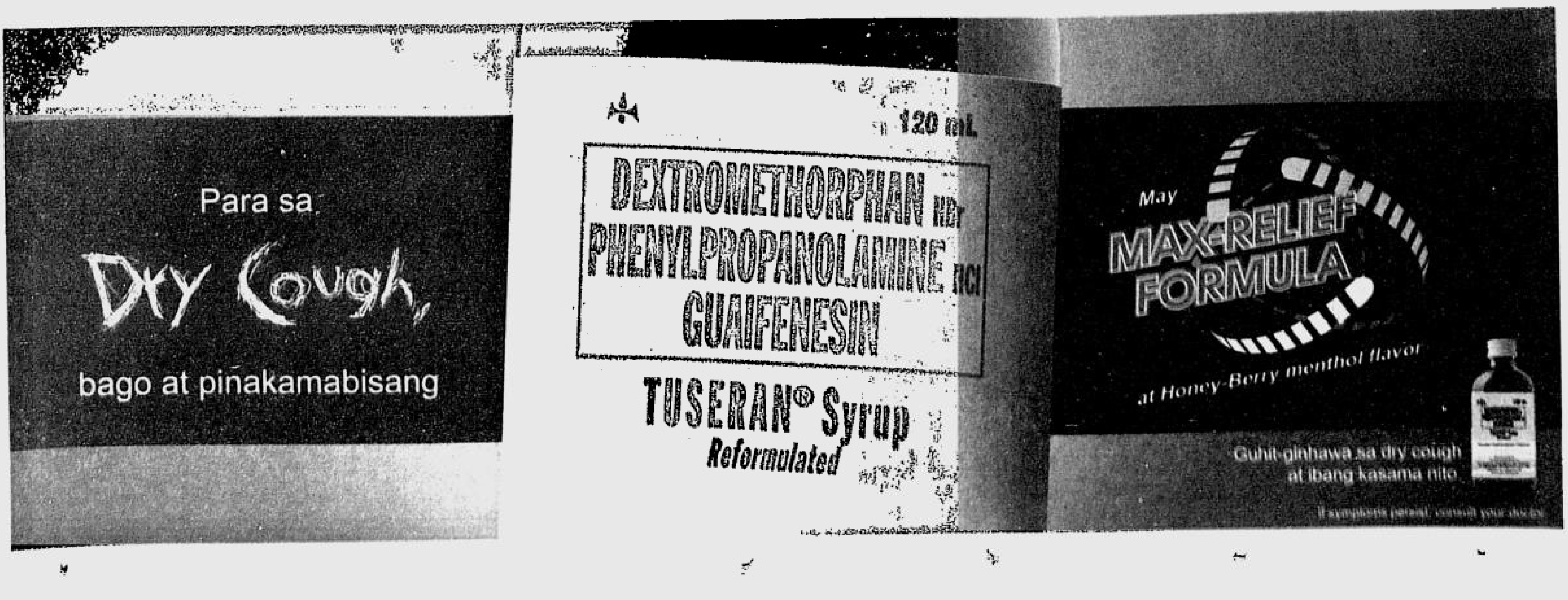
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Grains trader rescued from kidnappers in Lanao Norte

DAVAO CITY—Government troopers rescued a 67-year-old grains trader who was kidnapped at a bus terminal in Cagayan de Oro City two weeks ago, military officials said yesterday.

Agapito Puerto Jr., of Maramag, Bukidnon, was left unharmed by his kidnappers in Barangay Culubun in Pantao Ragat, Lanao del Norte, at around 10 p.m., Col. Ben Dolorfino, head of the 2nd Marine Brigade based in Lanao del Norte, said.

Puerto was reunited with his family yesterday afternoon. "This is the best gift that the Lord has given me," he told the INQUIRER.

Dolorfino said the trader was abducted by three men at the bus terminal on Dec. 9 on his way to Linamon, in Lanao del Norte. Puerto, he said, was brought to Pantao Ragat and was held in captivity by a band of armed men led by a certain Commander Tiger.

Before he was abducted, Puerto said he received a male visitor, who passed himself off as a go-between for a trader in Linamon. He said he traveled with the man to Cagayan de Oro, where they were to board a bus for Linamon.

At the terminal, he said, three men appeared and told him they were taking him in.

Dolorfino said the kidnappers contacted Puerto's family and demanded P5 million in ransom. But the family said it could not raise the amount and begged the kidnappers to release the victim.

On Monday, Dolorfino said the kidnappers lowered the ransom to ₱4 million and set the payoff for Wednesday.

When the family informed authorities about the deal, a rescue operation was planned with the help of local lawmen in Pantao Ragat, led by Mayor Hadji Lacson Lantud, the official said.

No shots were fired during the operation, Dolorfino said. Two of the kidnappers, who were guarding Puerto, fled after sensing the advancing troops, he added.

Puerto was brought to the Philippine Marines headquarters in Iligan City where he was met by Dolorfino and Lanao del Norte Rep. Abdullah Dimaporo.

Recalling his ordeal, Puerto said he was always tense and rarely ate food.

"I did not eat much because I was always anxious [about what his kidnappers were thinking]," he said. *Joselle dR. Badilla, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Tarongoy still alive, says labor chief

TARONGOY

By Jerome Aning

A FILIPINO accountant being held captive by insurgents in Iraq is still alive and may be released before the end of the year, Philippine government officials said yesterday.

Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas raised hopes for the release of accountant Robert Tarongoy, saying she was in constant touch with Rafael Seguis, foreign affairs undersecretary, who is in Iraq and working on the hostage's release.

Seguis promised not to come home without Tarongoy, said Sto. Tomas.

She said Seguis' efforts made it possible for Tarongoy to speak twice by telephone with his wife Ivy Grace.

Tarongoy's abductors have lowered their ransom demand from $12 million to an unspecified amount, according to Sto. Tomas.

She said Tarongoy's employer, Saudi Arabia Trading and Construction Co. (Satco), was expected to pay the ransom.

The Philippine government has an official policy of not paying ransom.

Marianito Roque Jr., Overseas Workers Welfare Administration chief, said Tarongoy's family was brought home to Davao for the holiday season.

Members of the family were kept in a government "safe house" to prevent them from being interviewed by reporters and, according to officials, for their privacy.

Sto. Tomas said the lack of news on Tarongoy's condition did not mean that the government was neglecting him.

Tarongoy was kidnapped together with an American, a Nepalese, and three Iraqis on Nov. 1 when Iraqi insurgents stormed the Satco offices in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad.

The Nepalese and Iraqi hostages had been released, but Tarongoy and American Roy Hallum were kept captive by their abductors.

Tarongoy was found to have entered Iraq illegally through Qatar in July after the Philippine government banned the deployment of workers to Iraq following the abduction of Filipino truck driver Angelo de la Cruz.

De la Cruz, who hails from Pampanga, was released after President Macapagal-Arroyo agreed to pull out Philippine troops on a humanitarian mission in Iraq ahead of schedule.

De la Cruz was abducted by Iraqi insurgents as he drove an oil tanker across the Iraqi desert from Saudi Arabia, taking a route described as very dangerous.

The former hostage has since found employment in the office of Sen. Lito Lapid, who hired De la Cruz as one of his personal drivers.

DOH tells households: Keep holidays healthy with vegetable dishes

By Blanche S. Rivera

THINK—and live—beyond Christmas.

Concerned about the occurrence of hypertension and heart attacks after the holidays, the Department of Health has advised Filipino households to prepare a healthy menu for the traditional *noche buena* and *media noche*.

Instead of just the usual feast of ham and *queso de bola*, try including some vegetable dishes in the main course and fruits and fruit juices for dessert, the DOH said in a health advisory.

"Be kind to your heart. Eat a moderate amount of nutritious foods to sustain your daily activities," it said in an advisory titled "Kalusugan sa Kapaskuhan."

After the heavy meals, drink plenty of liquids, particularly fruit juices, to facilitate excretion and make sure the family does not suffer from indigestion, it said.

Studies show that 12.6 million Filipinos are hypertensive, half of them unaware of their ailment until they suffer a heart attack or stroke, a common complication of high blood pressure.

Around 70 percent of all Filipinos with cardiovascular problems are hypertensive.

The health agency said it would be wise to plan not only the menu but the activities this Christmas. As offices close for the holidays, organize activities so that they do not become a source of tension and stress, the DOH said.

Other reminders:

- Use environment-friendly Christmas decors and make sure that your house does not become a fire hazard due to Christmas lights and decorations.
- When shopping for gifts, do not buy items with sharp and pointed edges. Be careful about giving toys with small parts that can cause choking among children.
- If at all possible, avoid crowded areas that are hosts to bacteria and usually facilitate the spread of viruses and diseases.

Both adults and children are susceptible to cough, cold and fever during the Christmas season due to the colder air, the health agency warned.

"Take care of yourself and your family against change in temperature. If your cough, cold and fever last more than five days, consult your nearest health station," the DOH said.

And when finally the party's over, sleep. The body and mind require much rest after all the festivities, the DOH said.

BAGUIO'S LITTLE ANGEL
A girl wearing an angel costume joins other "winged" children during the traditional lighting of the Christmas tree at the Baguio Country Club in Baguio City. TOOTS SOBERANO/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

Pimentel asks Lacson, Angara to stay with minority

By Christine O. Avendaño

WITH actor Fernando Poe Jr. dead and buried, the political opposition is moving to unite its ranks, at least in the Senate.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr., yesterday called on Senators Edgardo Angara and Panfilo Lacson, both members of the minority and bitter rivals since the last election, to work together.

"I am asking Edong (Angara) and Ping (Lacson)—they may not love one another—to please stay put with the minority and vote for the interests and rights of the people," Pimentel said in a phone interview.

The minority bloc in the Senate has nine members; the majority has 14.

He said he made the appeal in view of the death of Poe, a popular movie actor and presidential candidate in the May election, after a stroke. Poe was buried yesterday at the Manila North Cemetery.

Pimentel was responding to the query on what would happen to the opposition with the death of Poe, who ran under the opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino but lost eventually to Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

Pimentel stressed that the opposition would continue "with its advocacy to protect the rights of the people."

"We would also try to go about our duties as best as we can," he said.

Poe's defeat in the polls has been blamed on the split in the opposition after Lacson ran for president as an independent candidate and Angara's group supported Poe.

Lacson had been a member of the opposition Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino which Angara heads.

It was not the first time that Pimentel sought a reconciliation between Angara and Lacson.

Several months ago, the minority leader asked them to stop their tirades against one another. The animosity intensified after a minority meeting that saw Angara seeking Lacson's ouster from the bloc.

Angara has questioned Lacson's loyalty to the minority in the aftermath of the presidential elections.

Militant leaders of DOLE 'takeover' face charges

MILITANT groups that barged into the Department of Labor and Employment building and occupied it for three hours last month will be charged with disrupting public service, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas said yesterday.

"We will file charges against a number of people who entered our premises forcibly to hold their rally. I have instructed our lawyers to file the case," she told reporters.

Sto. Tomas was referring to leaders and members of the Sanlakas and the Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino, the party-list group Partido ng Manggagawa, and their affiliate labor unions that occupied the DOLE building in Intramuros, Manila.

"When they hold their rally, they should do it as civilized persons and not break our doors, manhandle our security guards and disrupt public service," the secretary said.

After overpowering the security personnel, about 300 protesters occupied the lobbies of six of the building's seven floors and unfurled banners from the windows. A thousand others blocked Muralla Street in front of the building.

The rally forced the DOLE to dismiss employees early and postpone hearings. Sto. Tomas, who was to attend a congressional hearing, had to leave her office through a side entrance.

The "occupation" ended peacefully after top labor officials met with the protest leaders.

Sto. Tomas said the DOLE's legal department already had the list of leaders of the militants and that the case may be filed either next week or the first week of January. She did not specify the nature of charges being prepared by the department.

The DOLE lawyers, she explained, were completing the affidavits of the security guards and employees who witnessed the takeover.

Sto. Tomas stressed that the issues raised by the groups were not even pending with the DOLE.

The bulk of the protesters were former employees of the garments firm Novelty Inc. who were demanding payment of their wages. Sto. Tomas said the case was already pending before a liquidation court.

The militants also demanded the scrapping of the labor secretary's discretionary power to assume jurisdiction over labor disputes following the death of several sugar workers at the Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac.

Sto. Tomas said the protesters should have gone to Congress and pushed for an amendment of the Labor Code, which provides for the secretary's power to issue assumption of jurisdiction orders.

"I think the things they did, they were milking certain issues to put the DOLE down. They should not be doing this to any government office or official," she said. *Jerome Aning*

NO-ACCREDITATION POLICY

RP to continue deployment of entertainers to Japan

By Jerome Aning

THE GOVERNMENT will continue deploying entertainers to Japan as it can comply with the new restrictions imposed by Japanese immigration authorities, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas said yesterday.

Sto. Tomas said the future was not so bleak for thousands of overseas performing artists (OPAs) in spite of Tokyo's new policy. She recalled that the Philippines was able to steadily deploy 50,000 OPAs every year in the '80s even without government accreditation.

Japan wants the accreditation system abolished in line with its current campaign against human trafficking. Instead of certification from the Philippine government, Japanese officials require Filipino OPAs going to their country to have completed at least two years' formal course in music, dancing or singing, or at least two years' experience in the entertainment industry.

Sto. Tomas said the no-accreditation policy was not really new. She recounted that when she was with the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration in the '80s, the government did not have a certification system and that entertainers with experience or schooling were the only ones allowed to go to Japan.

The secretary said the Artist Accreditation Card and its predecessors, the Artist Record Book and the "yellow card," came into being then as a result of coordination with Japanese authorities which wanted to impose qualifications of arriving musicians, singers, dancers and artists.

Only the Philippines was granted such a privilege, Sto. Tomas said.

"Now there has been a complete turnaround of that policy as Japan wants us to be at par with other countries that are also deploying OPAs. While we cannot disagree with their new policy, we are looking for a way of reconciling our concerns," she said.

The DOLE chief added that she was aware of the entertainment industry's fears that the abolition of accreditation could restrict the entry of Filipino talents to Japan.

She noted that many OPAs being sent to Japan were only high school graduates. Many talents could not afford formal schooling or training as they wanted to leave for Tokyo as soon as they get their certification papers and and earn a living to support their families' needs.

Sto. Tomas said the Philippines was glad to help Japan in its drive against "entertainers" who ended up as hostesses or prostitutes. "But we want to be assured that there would be no diminution in the number of legitimate entertainers going to Japan."

Without the support and cooperation in the verification policy of the entertainers' qualifications by the sending country, she said, OPAs would be exposed to more vicious attacks from traffickers who could easily produce spurious credentials.

Danilo Cruz, labor undersecretary for employment promotions, clarified that the abolition of accreditation and other new Japanese immigration policies were not yet in effect. Specific details and regulations have yet to be issued, he said.

Tokyo was still receiving comments and reactions from various sectors on the viability of the new rules before the year ends, Cruz said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has dispatched Secretary Dante Ang of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas to help Japanese entertainment promoters and clubhouse operators lobby and exert pressure on the Japanese government to defer implementation of the new policy.

Cruz and Jose Brillantes, foreign undersecretary for migrant workers affairs, would also be sent to Japan to closely work with Philippine Ambassador Domingo Siazon in convincing Tokyo to ensure that the new rule would not adversely affect the Filipino entertainers.

Manila is seeking either a five-year transition period or a discussion on ways to further enhance the Philippine accreditation system for the OPAs.

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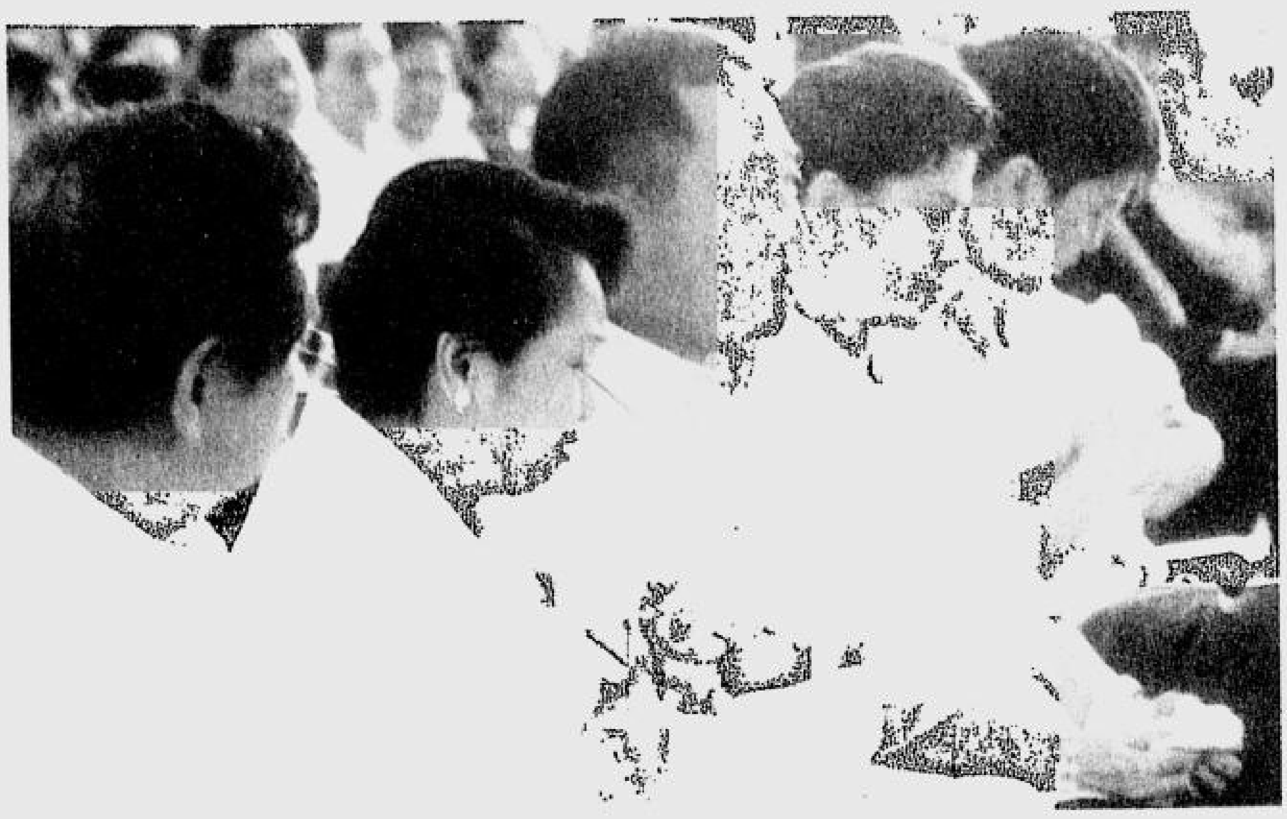


HAND clasping hand, President Arroyo herself in tears tries to console the inconsolable Speaker, wife Gina and son Christopher.
MANDY NAVASERO

KC leaves two legacies: Modernization of firefighting gear and an arts and sciences foundation for the poor

KC soars on wings of joy, tears

From page A1

San Antonio in Forbes Park, when relatives, friends and supporters released hundreds of balloons and butterflies for KC's "liftoff."

"Go fly, KC! Go fly!" chanted family and friends.

According to KC's older sister Carissa, the balloons symbolized prayers for the late teener while the butterflies stood for KC's beautiful transformation from mortal to spirit.

Former President Corazon Aquino and daughter Kris, Vice President Noli de Castro, Senate President Franklin Drilon and his wife Mila, former Vice President Teofisto Guingona Jr., legislators, Cabinet members and US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone were among the hundreds that filled the church for the 9:30 a.m. Mass.

The mourners came in white and pastel colors, in accordance with the family's request to celebrate KC's fruitful but brief life. Gina wore a KC pin on her lapel while the President and Aquino wore pink ribbons also worn by those who attended the Mass. The air-conditioned church was decorated with white roses and orchids and yes, Christmas lights.

The Mass was concelebrated by Bishop Antonio Tobias of the Diocese of Novaliches, Monsignors Augusto Laban and Jaime Boquieren, and Fr. Antonio Rosales.

In his homily, Rosales, the parish priest of Santuario, said KC's parents should not be afraid to grieve and weep "for tears cleanse us, our hearts and soul."

"We do not decide when we go, the circumstances of our death are immaterial. It is how we spent our years (that matter)," Rosales said. "They (parents) should be grateful to God for the 16 years that KC lived with them."

He added that the Mass was meant to be "an expression not only of our faith but of our joy even if that joy comes in the midst of tears."

So much grief

In the eulogy for his lost daughter, the Speaker said: "In a few days, I will be 68 and in all my years, all my ups and downs, I have not experienced so much grief, grievous grief."

He recounted how he lost the "biggest political battle of my life"—when he ran for president in 1998—and how his business in the Middle East almost went bankrupt.

"But all these incredible pains, tragedies that I went through are nothing compared to the grief of losing a daughter who is so young and so innocent and the light of our life," he said.

Suffocated and burned

For the first time, De Venecia admitted that his daughter not only suffocated but suffered burns when she was trapped in her brother Christopher's bedroom.

"I was out ... trying to complete the very crucial revenue measures our country badly needed not knowing that at the same time my house was burning," the Speaker said.

"If I could have gone home just an hour earlier, I could have saved my daughter KC," he lamented. "But that was not meant to be."

He said when he reached his house, he joined the brave firemen who tried four times to rescue his daughter.

"But my daughter was beyond rescue because we could not go in," he said, lamenting that KC could have been saved if the firemen had asbestos suits.

KC's legacy

KC leaves behind two legacies.

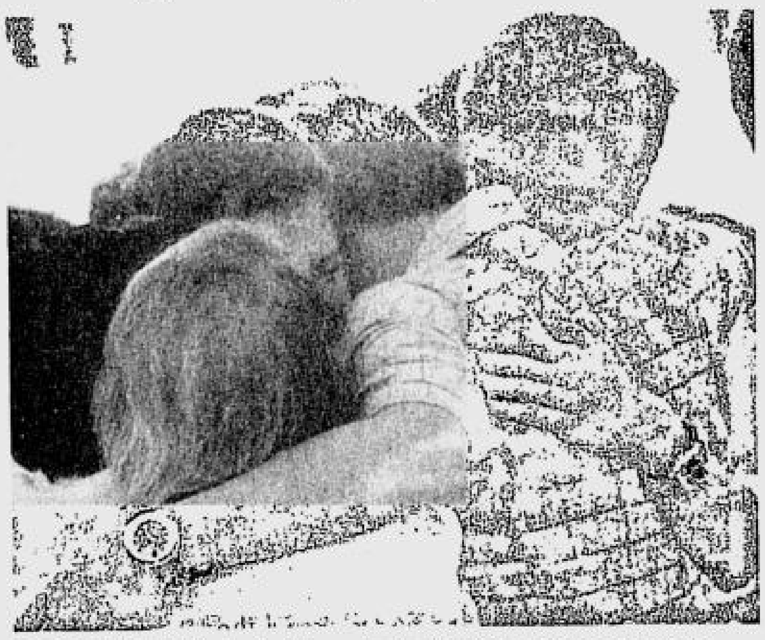
One is the modernization of the country's firefighting force, and second, the establishment of the KC de Venecia Foundation for the Arts and Sciences.

De Venecia said in his eulogy that the President had agreed on the allocation of P25-30 million in the 2005 national budget for the purchase of asbestos suits and oxygen masks for firefighters.

"The President said to me now 'we should do it,'" he said.

He noted that had the Makati firefighting force been equipped with these tools, they could have rescued KC from the fire.

He added that the purchase of such equipment would help ensure that "helpless octogenarians or babies or children or people who are sick can be rescued."



A GATHERING (below) of the grieving family hanging on to each other for solace and support.
MANDY NAVASERO

De Venecia said that before consulting Ms Arroyo on this specific budget allocation, he had broached the idea to Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr. (LP, Camarines Sur), chair of the House appropriations committee, and Senate President Franklin Drilon.

The House and Senate appropriations committees are set to go into bicameral conference discussions on the 2005 budget by late January.

"Perhaps KC's legacy is how we can modernize the firefighting forces of the nation," De Venecia said.

He said that his family had agreed to set up the KC de Venecia Foundation for the Arts and Sciences to help talented but poor people.

De Venecia recalled that when KC was only 8 years old, she held an exhibition for her paintings and earned about P500,000.

With this money, she and brother Christopher were able to help five or six seminarians complete their training for the priesthood.

Full of life

Family and friends took turns speaking about KC.

Actress Kris Aquino said she wished she had been a "good *ninang*" to KC, recalling that she had neglected to send her Christmas gifts except on the night of the fire.

"KC was the child who made *Manong* Joe smile," Kris said. "But now, I promise you one thing: I will make your Mom and Dad learn to smile again even if the person who made them smile the most is no longer around."

"She had a big heart and a big appetite for McDo. She was extremely brave and she wanted to experience what life had to offer," said Harvee, KC's classmate.

Christopher spoke of his anguish at how the iron grills meant to protect him and KC proved to be fatal to his sister. But he also provided a light moment by talking about KC's funniest moments.

Unexpected family reunion

Yesterday's send-off rites were an unexpected reunion of the children of the Speaker and wife Gina from previous marriages.

It brought Philip and Carissa from Gina's first marriage, and Leslie, Vivian and Joey from De Venecia's previous marriage, together with Christopher, KC's older brother.

Only Alexandra Haner, De Venecia's eldest daughter, failed to make it home from the United States.

Leslie Norton, De Venecia's daughter, said it was her saddest Christmas, describing KC as "funny, feisty and irreverent."

"She adored chaos," she said.

"She was witty, unapologetic, strong-willed," Philip said of his "favorite baby sister." "I'm happy that now God is KC's big brother. KC, you're really my favorite baby sister and I will miss you forever."

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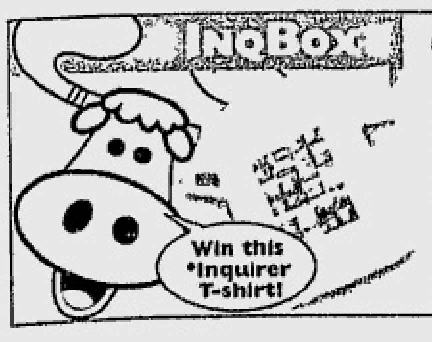

INQBOX
Question of the Week

What are your hopes and dreams for your family this Christmas and the New Year?

Senders of d first 10 texts publishd in Tuesday's INQBOX wiL each receiv an *Inquirer T-shirt! Ü

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(Maximum of 160 characters)
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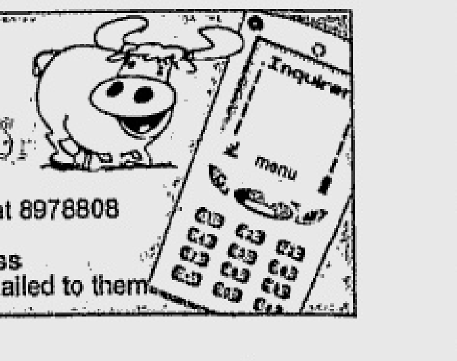


TAKENAKA CORPORATION
DO NOT ENTER

TRANSPORTATION officials take over Naia 3 terminal led by Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza on Tuesday. ROGER MARGALLO

German firm accuses gov't of breaking law on Naia 3

From page A1

the law," the company said in a statement. It dismissed the government's offered down payment as insufficient.

The Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA) took over Naia 3 hours after getting the go ahead from the Pasay City Regional Trial Court.

In issuing a writ of possession, Judge Henrick Gingoyon of Branch 117 took "judicial notice" of the fact that the Supreme Court had nullified last year the contracts signed by the Estrada administration and the consortium Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (Piatco). The high court said the contracts were disadvantageous to the government.

Legal battle

"This court entertains no doubt that (Naia 3) is a structure for a well-defined public purpose. Air transport is important to Philippine economy, particularly the movement of goods and services," Gingoyon said in his order.

The modern terminal has been left unused since major building work was virtually completed in 2002.

Fraport, which operates the Frankfurt airport, repeated its demand for financial compensation in a long-running legal battle that is currently before the World Bank's International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes.

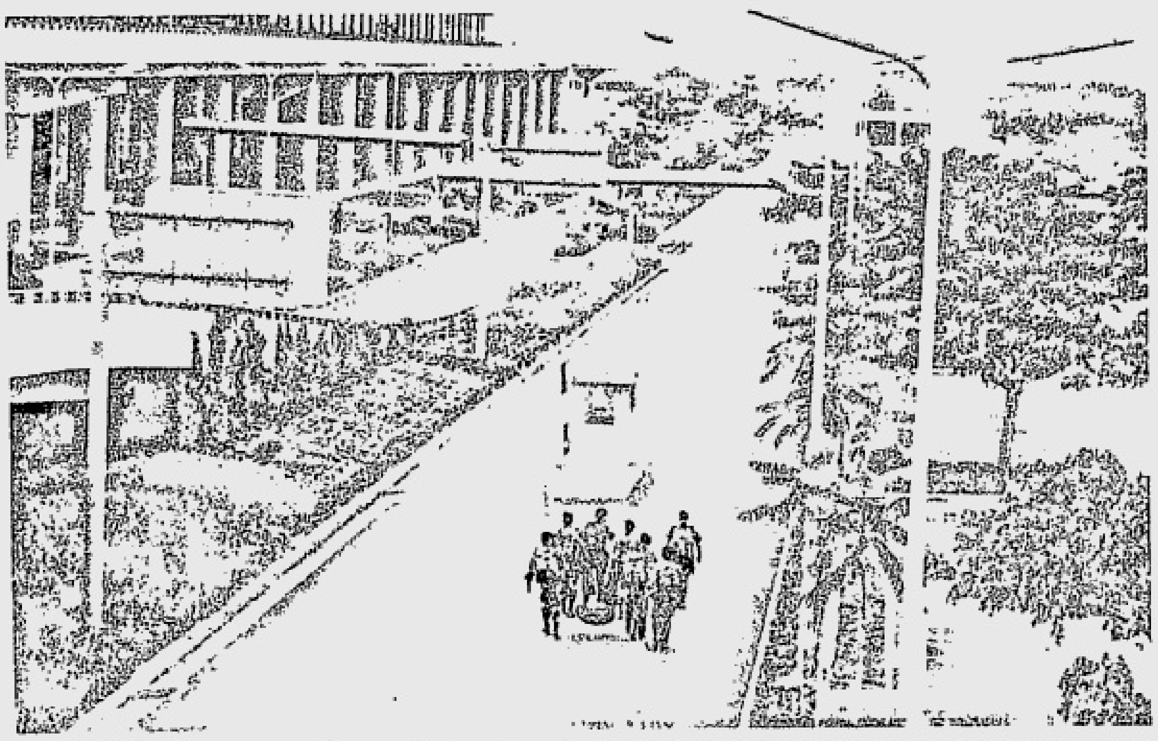
The German firm said it wanted a minimum of 350 million euros ($465 million) and would "vigorously" pursue its claim. Piatco is seeking compensation of more than $500 million.

At a briefing in Malacañang on Tuesday night shortly after the MIAA took over Naia 3, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the government was open to allowing a private group bankroll its takeover of Naia 3 following the expropriation of the idle international passenger terminal.

"We're not ruling that out, everything is possible," Ermita said.

Open within six months

Sergio Ortiz-Luis, one of the business leaders consulted by the government on Naia 3, said the government planned to operate the project for a brief period before bidding out the project. Ortiz-Luis is the president of the Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc.



GOVERNMENT troops march toward the main gate of Piatco's Naia 3 airport after a court order allowed the government to take over control of the terminal, idle for the past two years. ROGER MARGALLO

Ermita said the government planned to put Naia 3 in operation within six months at an estimated cost of $15 million (P840 million).

But except for the P3-billion deposit advanced by MIAA as part of the expropriation, Ermita could not say where the cash-strapped government would get the money to spend for the completion of Naia 3 and to reimburse Piatco.

As the government ponders how to come up with the money to compensate Piatco and Fraport, business leaders and the tourism industry hailed the government for taking over Naia 3.

Ramon del Rosario Jr., chair of the Philippines-US Business Council, said: "Our hope is that by accelerating government's takeover of the facility, the expropriation will pave the way for Terminal 3 to be operational in the near future, so that it can begin to serve the needs of Filipino travelers and foreign visitors without further delay."

Del Rosario said that he was also pleased that the expropriation proceedings had come with government assurance that it would pay fair and just compensation for the facility.

About time

Donald Dee, executive vice president of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry Inc., said it was about time the government operate Naia 3 because it had waited long enough to reach an amicable settlement before taking over the facility.

The opening of Naia 3 topped the list of infrastructure that foreign and local businessmen believe would inject more confidence into the economy.

"We note with approval that the expropriation proceedings come with the assurance from government that it will pay fair and just compensation for the facility as ordered by the Supreme Court," said Guillermo M. Luz, executive director of the Makati Business Club.

Luz urged the government to assure the public that "the facility will be operated and managed according to international best practices by experienced and competent managers."

Political will

Ten of the tourism industry's biggest associations also announced their full support for the government takeover of Naia 3.

In a letter addressed to President Macapagal-Arroyo, the private sector associations hailed the government's "strong political will" in the takeover of the facility.

The letter was signed by the heads of the Federation of Tourism Industries of the Philippines, Hotel and Restaurant Association of the Philippines, Philippine Travel Agencies Association, Philippine Hotel Federation, Philippine Association of Convention Exhibition Organizers and Suppliers, Hotel Sales and Marketing Association, Philippine Tour Operators Association, Association of Car Rental Companies Inc., Freedom to Fly Coalition and Manila Japanese Travel Agents and Hoteliers Association.

Tourist arrivals

They said the takeover was timely "in view of the continued increase in international tourist arrivals, especially during the holiday season."

Records of the Department of Tourism showed that as of October this year, tourist arrivals had reached 1.861 million, up 24.3 percent from the same last year. *Reports from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Nancy Carvajal, Jerome Aning and AFP*

A horse called 'Tisoy' steals viewers' hearts

From page A1

who pulled Poe's hearse and "Bonus," who carried Da King's saddle and favorite boots.

Tisoy, a white male horse, around 6 years old, bravely marched for more than three hours, drawing Poe's caisson in the midst of a rowdy crowd.

Earlier, Conrad Poe told reporters that the family wanted the funeral march to reflect FPJ's love for horses.

'Great Year'

The original plan was for the hearse to be preceded by Poe's favorite race horse "Great Year," Poe coordinator Susan Tagle told reporters a few days before the burial.

But organizers changed their minds after the horse's caretaker said "Great Year" could be agitated by the huge crowd and the bright lights from TV cameras.

Neither Tisoy nor Bonus, however, was owned by Poe. Tisoy was rented from Ednoel Hearse Rental, while Bonus was from the Rizal Funeral Homes.

The two horses which joined the almost four-hour funeral march for Poe yesterday morning are no strangers to high profile funeral marches.

Bonus pulled the hearse during the funeral of popular composer George Canseco.

However, they were apparently bothered by the number of people, many of whom tried to squeeze themselves into the march to get near the hearse, Ednoel driver Rogelio de Leon told the INQUIRER.

Some fans also rushed to touch the horses, while others used firecrackers which scared them, De Leon added.

Tisoy's handler Albert Dimanlig said the horse had been drawing a hearse for three years, but never with yesterday's extreme conditions.

Keeping cool

Tisoy was constantly surrounded by shouting, at times pushing and shoving men and women. Its path was far from clear. It was filled with people who were, in fact, trying to get near it.

But the horse kept its cool.

Tisoy also had to stop every five minutes or so because the crowds started to thicken. This was particularly tiring because it was constantly trying to gather momentum. But the hard-working horse endured.

At the Dimasalang Bridge in Manila, Tisoy paused a lot longer than it did during the first hour. It was tired. There was talk of replacing Tisoy with Bonus, who was walking a few paces ahead and was considerably fresher.

Bonus, which has been in the hearse business for six years, carried only a pair of brown boots on its back. But the process of untangling and fitting Tisoy's reins on Bonus could have complicated things even more.

Christopher de Leon, one of the actors who walked beside the hearse, was seen stroking Tisoy and whispering in its ears.

Several times the horses were given cola to drink and sugar to nibble.

Finally, at 8:30 a.m., Tisoy and Bonus reached Manila's North Cemetery, Poe's final destination.

Fan loses slippers, walks 6.5 km barefoot

From page A1

white confetti and rose petals from a chopper, and of blue confetti from the windows of high buildings.

From a building on España, white and blue balloons were released. Men perched on rooftops on Dimasalang Street waited with bags of flower petals, which they scattered over Poe's coffin as it passed.

There were placards galore—lambasting Ms Arroyo or declaring undying love for "FPJ."

The bigger banners said: "*Tuloy ang laban ni* FPJ (FPJ's fight continues)."

Aside from the FPJ helicopter, another was flying low, its occupants taking videos of the marchers.

Mayor Ejercito said that it was a government chopper, and that he saw a similar one used during the May elections.

On Dimasalang, it flew so low that the marchers could feel the gust from its rotor blades. The noise it produced was also incredibly loud. *(Editor's Note: In fact, it was the GMA 7 chopper.)*

* * *

Poe's body arrived at Manila's North Cemetery at around 8:30 a.m. By 10 a.m., the crowd that had massed outside the cemetery was already thinning out.

Asked if he would have joined a march to Malacañang if it ever came to that, Jun Salazar of Batangas City shook his head.

"It's enough that I've seen him off," Salazar said of Poe. "He was my idol, you know. He made me happy, and I came here to pay my respects. That is enough."

* * *

Fely Buenafe lost her slippers when the crowd outside the Sto. Domingo Church became unruly as Poe's casket was being brought out at dawn.

But the 50-year-old fan thought nothing of it. Barefoot and wearing an abaca hat with a blue ribbon and the letters "FPJ" written on it, Buenafe marched the 6.5 km from church to cemetery.

Buenafe and her companion even ran hand in hand and jostled with other mourners for a chance to get near the carriage bearing the casket.

Asked if she did not find it difficult marching barefoot, she said she could bear it. She had tried to buy a new pair but no store was open, so she proceeded as is, she said.

Buenafe also said the long march would be easy because she had been going to Poe's wake for the past three days. Besides, she said, she was not going to miss his funeral.

* * *

Equally devoted was Carmen Guerrero, who traveled all the way from Catanduanes province when she heard that Poe was comatose.

Guerrero, 53, arrived in Manila on the first day of Poe's wake at the Sto. Domingo Church, and stayed until the funeral.

"I only leave the area to take a bath at a relative's house, but I return immediately," she said, adding that she had viewed her idol's body five times.

Guerrero, who held a white rose like other Poe supporters, said her favorite movie was his "Dito sa Pitong Gatang."

* * *

Poe fans actually risked their lives to catch a last glimpse of his coffin.

"I don't care if I fall down, as long as I see his burial," said Efren Derolao, 42, who stood with some 30 others on top of a mausoleum inside the North Cemetery.

Derolao and the others had waited atop the mausoleum on 24th Street, a few meters away from the Poe family plot, since 4 a.m.

Into their fourth hour of waiting, the tin roof supported by a plywood ceiling and iron bars on the edges, started shaking and threatened to collapse.

But Derolao and company insisted on staying put despite warnings from marshals and other spectators on the ground.

Clad in a tattered shirt, soiled shorts, and an "I Love FPJ" band on his right wrist, the longtime Poe fan told the marshals to go away. "*Kahit na bumagsak* (Even if I fall)!" he shouted.

* * *

Seeing the fans—whether kids, teens, adults and even senior citizens older than Poe—bypassing blocked-off areas, climbing trees and standing atop tombs and mausoleums, the funeral organizers appealed for calm and urged them to show respect for "the President's funeral."

"FPJ would not want anyone to get hurt," former child actor Niño Muhlach, a staunch Poe supporter, said over the microphone on a makeshift stage near Poe's tomb, minutes before the body arrived.

But Derolao, a pedicab driver, sat on one corner of the roof and continued his long wait with no food or water.

In the end, both he and the mausoleum roof survived.

* * *

Derolao, who volunteered as a watcher for Poe's votes in the May presidential election, said he had spent a good hour walking from his house on Raxabago Street in Tondo to get the best view of his idol's interment.

"I've watched all his movies. I even watched him shooting 'Batang Quiapo' and 'Kalibre 45,'" Derolao said proudly, now and then raising his fist in cadence with the crowd's chanting of his idol's initials.

* * *

As vigorous in joining the FPJ chants was Crisencia Genes, 69, among the first at the funeral to succumb to the heat and exhaustion.

"Even if I die here ... We are for FPJ, FPJ, FPJ!" Genes chanted in broken sentences as she struggled to catch her breath and composure after coming close to passing out.

She had arrived at the Sto. Domingo Church from the family home inside Fort Bonifacio in Taguig at 12 a.m. yesterday, and walked all the way to the North Cemetery to escort her beloved Poe to his final resting place.

"I haven't eaten. But even if I won't be able to eat in a day, I will be here to see FPJ buried," said the sobbing Genes, a fish vendor, wife of a retired soldier, and mother of nine.

* * *

In between chanting Poe's initials, Genes said she was a loyalist of deposed strongman Ferdinand Marcos and ousted President Joseph Estrada, Poe's best friend.

"I always join whatever side is for goodness. They can't keep me from joining the people," she said as she wiped tears for the man she hailed as a hero.

* * *

The determination to see Poe's remains, to be with the body on its last day "above ground," was shared by many.

A 76-year-old man waited patiently for a chance to get a glimpse of Poe—or even just his coffin—outside the gate of the Sto. Domingo Church.

He stood his ground despite being pushed or even shoved by the crowd.

An elderly woman was finding it difficult to walk without a cane, but she plodded on.

Her son said she had insisted on coming to the funeral. They arrived at 3 a.m.—a full two hours before Poe's casket was removed from the church.

* * *

Mercidas Sevilla, 59, said she borrowed P2,000 from a neighbor to get to Manila from Borongan, Samar.

She was with a dozen other people—all fans of "Da King."

Negotiating a thick crowd with her friend Norma Evangelista, 48, Sevilla recalled how she was devastated by Poe's demise.

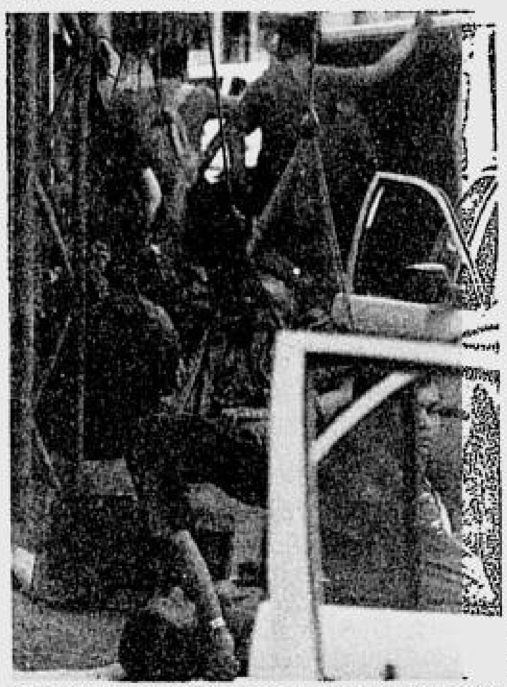
"We all cried upon learning what had happened," she said as she walked away slowly. "I borrowed some money to get here. I want to say goodbye." *Luige A. del Puerto, Tarra V. Quismundo and Leila B. Salaverria*

A FUNERAL FIT FOR 'DA KING'

LEGIONS of fans cheer their idol even in death as his funeral convoy arrives at the cemetery. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

JOSEPH AGCAOILI

TIME to clean up the the litter of a sorrowing eight days. FPJ volunteers do the honors.



EDWIN BACASMAS

MEANWHILE at the Palace, the security take it easy as the massive funeral is turning out to be peaceful.

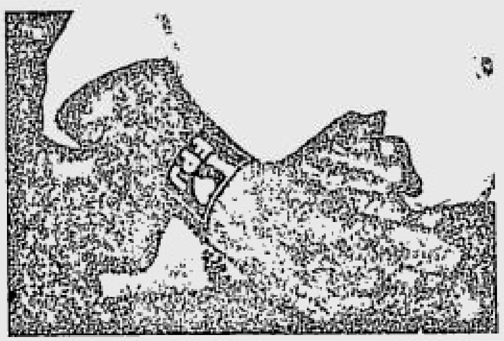
The burial of a movie legend may have pushed Filipino idol worship and crowd psychology to a new level

GMA STEP DOWN!
CNU

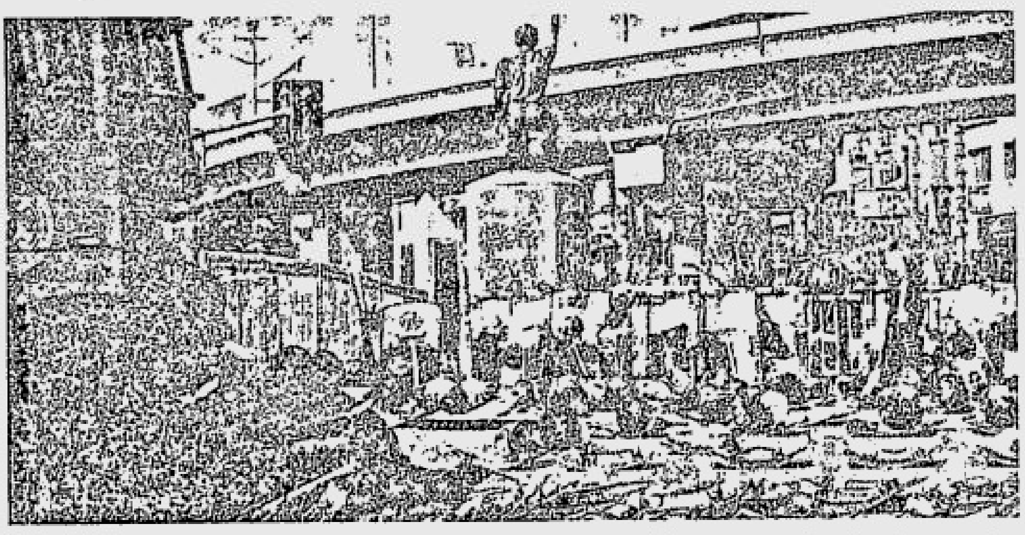
POLITICS couldn't be helped as these supporters believe FPJ was elected president but was "defeated by deceit."

PAALAM DA KING
We Will Miss You!!!
DAVAO DEL NORTE
DAVAO ORIENTAL

PUBLIC adulation and solidarity with the Luzon/Visayas mourners at the Davao City park. BING GONZALES/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

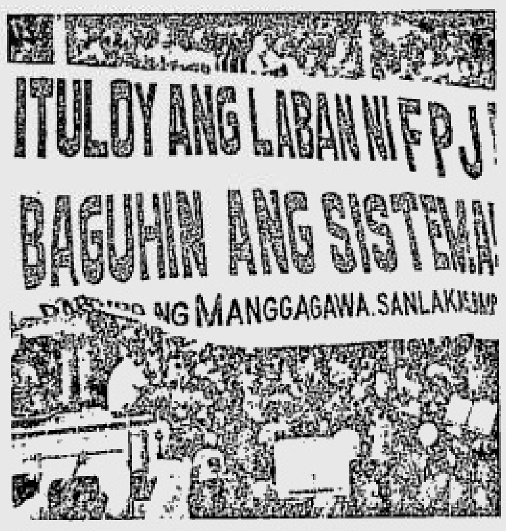


LIKE the wristband says. REM ZAMORA

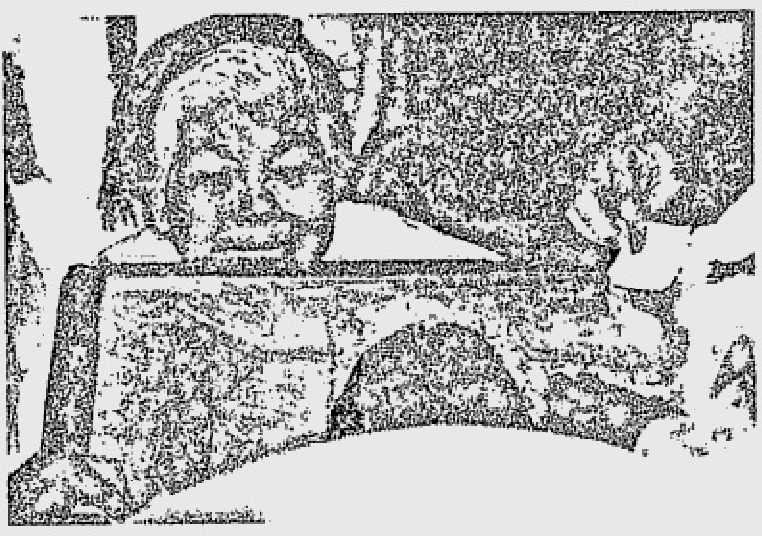


TOOTS SOBERANO/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

ON STANDBY in Mendiola are security forces just in case violent mass action heads toward Malacañang. EDWIN BACASMAS


ITULOY ANG LABAN NI FPJ!
BAGUHIN ANG SISTEMA!
NG MANGGAGAWA SANLAKAS

MILITANTS wear their sentiments on a banner set up along España Boulevard.



ERIK ARAZAS

THE LAST night but this senior citizen's grieving has yet to run its course. REM ZAMORA

DOJ bares plot to oust Gloria, install Susan, junta

From page A1

noon yesterday.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) lowered its red alert status to "white alert" following Poe's burial. "Also, the Christmas break for soldiers resumes 5 p.m. (yesterday)," said Lt. Col. Buenaventura Pascual, chief of the AFP Public Information Office.

The AFP went on white alert after a destabilization move supposed to have been launched by groups from the Left or the Right had been quashed.

Pascual said the plot "probably" fizzled out because of the deployment of some 2,500 soldiers in Metro Manila.

Fortress

Malacañang was fortified like a fortress as early as Tuesday night as the Presidential Security Group (PSG) cut all vehicle access to the Palace grounds.

Employees and visitors with vehicles were advised to park their cars at the Malacañang Park on the other side of the Pasig River and to take a ferry boat to get to the Palace.

But the PSG soon realized that its security precautions turned out to be an "overreaction." It eased security restrictions as early as 8 a.m. (when Poe's funeral march reached the North Cemetery) and started allowing vehicles entry into the Palace grounds.

"We are deeply concerned about a credible intelligence report that there is an evolving conspiracy on the part of some groups to use FPJ's funeral march and burial to incite the people to turn against their government. I have been briefed on this matter by our intelligence authorities. There is a firm basis for their findings," Gonzalez said in a statement.

The alleged plot involved a replay of the past two Edsa uprisings with opposition supporters massing up and a general later announcing the military's withdrawal of support from the administration.

Gonzalez said the plotters planned to replace Ms Arroyo with a seven-member junta that would include a "popular television evangelist" as chair and former President Joseph Estrada.

Roces would become the "figurehead" of the new government.

Namedroppers?

However, Gonzalez said that the plotters might have just been using the names of Roces and Estrada without the two ever knowing about the plot.

"Some plotters drop names to give a semblance of legitimacy to that group. I do not know if Erap even knows about it," he said.

While the Poe family was not involved, the plotters allegedly included "former Estrada Cabinet members, his supporters, and FPJ people." Gonzalez said former Senators Juan Ponce Enrile and Vicente Sotto III were not involved.

Sotto said the mainstream opposition had no intention to take over the Arroyo administration by exploiting the death of Poe.

"Our intention was very clear from the start and that was to allow his supporters to view him and for them to express their grief and sorrow," Sotto said in a phone interview.

Sotto said Gonzalez's claims against the opposition were a "product of poor intelligence" from his people who "either want to ingratiate themselves with him or the administration."

"They've been reading too much Tom Clancy books," he added.

DOJ wrong

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said Gonzalez was proven wrong. "It was a peaceful march and nobody was trying to agitate anyone," he pointed out.

Pimentel said that the large number of supporters of Poe who joined the funeral march up to his burial were "motivated not by hatred but love for their idol."

For her part, former opposition senatorial candidate Amina Rasul said there could still be restlessness among the people.

"If you would look at this administration, it had a honeymoon period of three years and people expected that with a second term she (President Arroyo) would have already picked up immediately and delivered the fiscal reforms but she has not," she said.

Next 48 hours critical

Gonzalez declined to comment when asked about the possible involvement of former Sen. Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan and civil society leader Pastor "Boy" Saycon.

"It remains critical in the next 48 hours or so but I think (the plot) has dissipated. Nothing much happened. They did not have a forced march to the Palace unlike before," he said.

He said the government "never expected" violence to explode during the funeral Mass or the march from Sto. Domingo Church to Manila's North Cemetery. He said that Malacañang expected the plotters to move after Poe was buried.

"The idea of the provocateurs was to use the emotions, unleased by the death of Poe, against the government," he said.

Nica analysis

Up to yesterday afternoon, Gonzalez said he continued to receive intelligence reports that were being analyzed by the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (Nica).

Gonzalez said that the government learned about the plot last month and that the plotters allegedly reckoned that Ms Arroyo would last in power only up to February or May next year.

He said the planned takeover of government gained momentum when the plotters saw an opportunity after Poe's death on Dec. 14.

It was during the actor's wake that intelligence operatives intercepted four conversations between the colonel and the opposition lawyer, Gonzalez said.

He said the colonel was in active service and apparently came from the Army while the lawyer was a "former government official who figured prominently" in the opposition after the 1986 People Power Revolution.

'Gabriela Silang'

He said the conversations were "coded"—the plotters gave Roces the codename Gabriela Silang—and the two were "extremely careful" in their talk. However, government informants were able to crack open their plot.

Gonzalez said the two men mentioned a general who would announce the withdrawal of military support from the government but he added that the plotters might have just been name-dropping.

He said there was also mention of Army Scout Rangers being "courted" to join the plot but their chief, Col. Danilo Lim, had "disclaimed" any involvement.

The justice secretary said Ronald Lumbao, leader of the People's Movement Against Poverty, was also involved in the plot but his group was "low-key" because "he knows he is under surveillance."

Ka Roger

Gonzalez added that another report said that "an actor" talked to New People's Army leader Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal on how to exploit Poe's death.

"We have to further verify this but what is important is we know what is going on. We know what they're doing and where they are meeting," Gonzalez said.

He added that the group recently met in Hotel Rembrandt in Quezon City and it was even covered by a television crew.

Gonzalez said the situation became critical during Poe's funeral at Sto. Domingo Church that he was awakened from his sleep when the President called for an emergency meeting at 3 a.m. in Malacañang.

Emergency meeting

Among those present were Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Social Welfare Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman and heads of intelligence agencies.

Gonzalez said the President summoned him to get legal advice on what could be done should the situation deteriorate. After the meeting, Gonzalez read a statement that was aired on cable television, warning Poe supporters not to be carried away by their emotions.

"I must make a fair warning that when our democracy is threatened, it is the right and duty of government to uphold the law and justice and protect the people. The defense of the state is the prime duty of government. We shall not allow riots or seditious acts to rule the streets," he said.

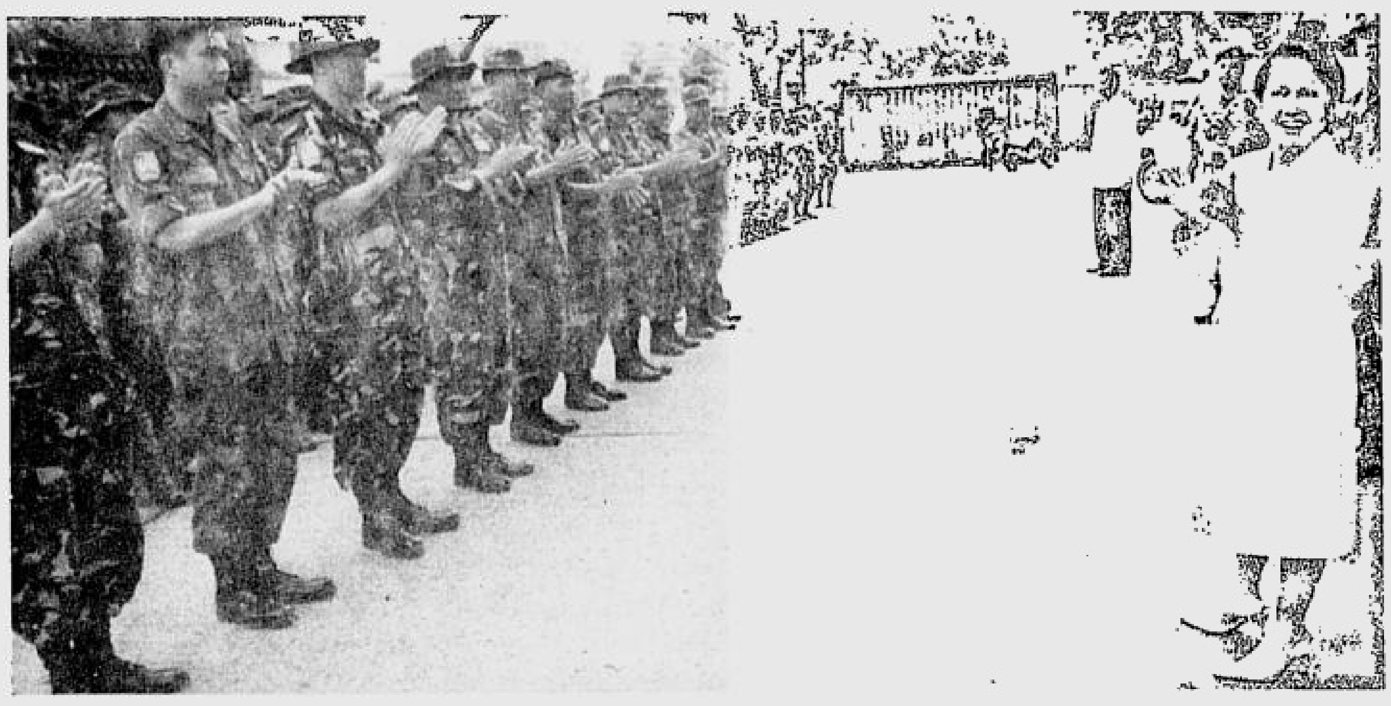
'Very confident'

Gonzalez said that Ms Arroyo looked very confident despite the threats and left the meeting to get some sleep at 4 a.m.

"She was very confident. When some names (of the plotters) were mentioned, she was even laughing," Gonzalez said.

When other alleged plotters were mentioned, the President herself "dismissed them outright," he added. *With a report from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

Legions see last FPJ blockbuster



A BIG hand from the little lady: President Arroyo visits with the soldiers who had secured Malacañang during the Poe funeral and heartily applauds them for their vigilance and a job well done. EDWIN BACASMAS

From page A1

was felled by a stroke on Dec. 14.

As the horse-drawn hearse reached the family plot, supporters let loose clusters of blue and white balloons. Earlier, an unidentified fan flew a kite with the words "FPJ We love you."

The priest led the singing of the national anthem as Poe's coffin was first laid in front of the tombs of his parents, Fernando Sr. and Bessie Kelley.

Jesusa Sonora—Susan Roces, the widow—broke down in tears while viewing Poe's remains for the last time.

She was seen bending down to kiss her husband farewell, before turning to embrace her weeping daughter, Mary Grace.

At 9:30 a.m. and amid the repeated recitation of the "Hail Mary" by Ramirez, pall bearers pushed the casket into the still roughly paved tomb. Family members and friends threw white roses on its top.

'He's now with Mama Mary'

"We have handed over FPJ to Mama Mary, and we wish her to take care of him," Ramirez told the crowd. "Let's give FPJ a big, big round of applause!"

Roces also threw herself over the coffin of her husband in the pre-dawn funeral Mass at Sto. Domingo Church.

"God, thank you so much for the 36 years you gave us together," she said in her remarks.

The burial of a movie legend may have pushed Filipino idol worship and crowd psychology to a new level.

Show of numbers, endurance

As if the massive wake wasn't enough show of numbers and a test of endurance for Poe's fans and political supporters, the five-hour funeral march stretched Pinoy fanaticism to lengths unseen since the similarly historic burials of Ninoy Aquino and former President Ramon Magsaysay.

Old women who would otherwise scold children for climbing up roofs and trees were among those jostling for position along the funeral route and atop mausoleums surrounding Poe's burial site, hoping for a view of the greatest show in town.

The very same crowds who easily erupted into "F-P-J!" chants at the slightest cue from former child star Niño Muhlach totally ignored his pleas for them to maintain order and "respect our president's burial."

Frenzy and humor

A mix of show biz mania and Pinoy humor also fueled the crowd's energy in what was supposedly a somber religious ritual.

A sweaty FPJ fan, who arrived too late to see his idol's coffin, said: "'It's OK, I'll just look at the *artistas* (actors and actresses)" gathered around.

After Poe's family and closest friends left, the *masa* crowd moved in, as if declaring their rightful claim over the tomb of "Da King."

Women wailed as they tossed flowers. Men felt the fresh damp concrete of the tomb on their palms.

In the semi-circular burial lot, FPJ lay at the extreme eastern side about three feet from actor-brother, Andy Poe, who died in 1995. To Andy's left lay their parents Fernando Sr. and his wife.

Several injured

A chopper overhead marked with large letters "FPJ" dropped blue confetti and white petals.

The chopper was piloted by Jude Estrada, son of Poe's close friend, deposed President Joseph Estrada, according to Muhlach.

Police estimates of the crowd of mourners, including those who lined the streets, ranged from "tens of thousands" to 300,000, according to foreign news agencies.

One of the marchers, Juanita Garcia, 50, was also at the 1983 Aquino funeral.

"The emotions were more intense. Then, the people were largely quiet and we were just sympathizing. Today, we really love him (Poe)," she said.

Lusito Pineda, 54, was watching from a street when Aquino's coffin passed by. Yesterday, he sacrificed sleep to be near his idol.

"At Ninoy's funeral, many people were well dressed. Here, we are like ordinary folk," he said.

In the crush at the cemetery, two people were hurt when they fell from a mausoleum. They suffered fractured bones and contusions. Three people, including two women, fainted due to the heat.

Cheers and howls

Mourners erupted in cheers and howls at the sight of actors, actresses and politicians, as though they were watching a shooting of a Poe movie.

Brothers Jinggoy and Jude Estrada and San Juan Mayor Jose Victor Ejercito, sons of Poe's close friend and deposed President Estrada, received the wildest cheers.

Bashing GMA

Also around were former Senators Loren Legarda and Vicente Sotto III, Ilocos Rep. Imee Marcos and her brother Gov. Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Quezon City Rep. Vincent Crisologo, Poe's spokesperson Sorsogon Rep. Francis Escudero, Navotas Mayor Tobias Tiangco and former Manila Mayor Mel Lopez.

Some of Poe's supporters lambasted Ms Arroyo, whom they accused of robbing their idol of the presidency in the May elections.

"*Humanda kayo! Kakarmahin din!* (Watch out! The devil will be on you!)," bit actor Amay Bisaya harangued the crowd from a makeshift stage beside the Poe family plot.

A woman grabbed the microphone from Niño Muhlach and berated Ms Arroyo, calling her "a cheat" and shouting: "FPJ is the true president."

Along the route of the 6.5-km funeral march, the young, the old and the noticeably poor cheered and cried and muscled their way to catch a last glimpse of the coffin of their idol.

Kalingas, too

At the cemetery, many took off their shoes and slippers so they could more easily squeeze into the thick crowd. Others came barefoot. ***(Related story on Page A1.)***

Save for Poe's well-dressed supporters from politics and show business, many among the ordinary folk came in faded, if not tattered, shirts and shorts, their hair disheveled.

Children clinging to their parents wore no undergarments. Some men were naked from the waist up.

Ten Kalinga natives from Baguio showed up in G-strings. They later got free black FPJ shirts.

The rowdy throngs were reminiscent of the crowd that stormed Malacañang in 2001 after Estrada was ousted from power.

Police overwhelmed

The force of 200 cops and 600 volunteer marshals deployed at the cemetery looked puny as thousands of Poe supporters began charging toward the Poe family plot after his hearse arrived.

Others ran over a barricade supposed to separate the crowd from the media and close friends of the actor.

The ensuing chaos kept Legarda, the Marcoses and others away from the burial ceremonies.

Marshals had to shove the thick crowd to allow Roces and other relatives to get to the family plot. Family friends tried to keep the ceremony undisturbed but many people shouted and shoved.

Security nightmare

"It's really a security nightmare," burial organizer Cynthia Colet said. "People are just popping out of everywhere even if we thought we had already blocked all possible entrances."

At one point, a well-built man with dyed blond hair lost his cool and punched three unruly male mourners blocking his path toward the tent of medical volunteers.

Even the tent standing near an area initially reserved strictly for Poe's relatives and friends nearly collapsed in the riotous atmosphere.

Frustrated, many left the cemetery without catching a glimpse of Poe's casket. Some watched the event on television sets installed in nearby mausoleums, consoled with the thought that they were part of history.

"All the fears and trembling of our government have been put to rest because we have shown what is the real spirit of justice, love and mercy, and courage. And these are colorfully etched in the life of FPJ," Father Ramirez said as he left the cemetery.

Reuters said that Roces succumbed to the intense heat and had to be carried to her car during the burial rites, but she returned as Poe's coffin was placed in the tomb. ***With reports from TJ Burgonio, Luige A. del Puerto and Alcuin Papa***

IN THE KNOW

By the PDI Research

IN HIS final place of rest, Fernando Poe Jr. lies in the company of heroes, presidents, senators, national artists and other Filipinos who were also celebrated and loved by a grateful country.

The 54-hectare Manila North Cemetery has been a favorite resting place of famous Filipinos. Its history as a burial place dates back to 1904, long before private memorial parks began to mushroom in Metro Manila.

Among the personalities laid to rest at the North Cemetery are:

1. President Ramon Magsaysay
2. President Manuel Roxas
3. President Manuel Quezon (his remains were later transferred to the Quezon Memorial Circle)
4. President Sergio Osmeña Sr.
5. Sen. Claro M. Recto
6. Benito Legarda y Tuason
7. Mayor Arsenio Lacson
8. Mayor Tomas B. Morato (Quezon City's first mayor)
9. Joaquin "Chino" Roces
10. Jose Corazon de Jesus a.k.a. "Huseng Batute"
11. Amado V. Hernandez and Atang de la Rama
12. Manuel Earnshaw
13. The Nakpil-Bautistas like Dr. Ariston Bautista Lin, Juan Nakpil, Julio Nakpil and wife Gregoria de Jesus
14. Lourdes Tuason Arroyo, mother-in-law of President Macapagal-Arroyo
15. The Elizaldes
16. The American Thomasites
17. Pio del Pilar
18. World boxing champion Pancho Villa
19. Chiquito (Augusto V. Pangan)

SOURCES: RONALD CATU OF THE MANILA NORTH CEMETERY, PDI ARCHIVES, HTTP:WWW.POLITICAL-GRAVEYARD.COM

Poe's memory, face live on in death mask

From page A1

other projects, like producing trophies carrying Poe's face.

Abueva told the INQUIRER that there were no immediate plans yet on how the mold would be used, saying he would keep it in the meantime "just for reference."

The molding began about 2 a.m. yesterday and took more than 30 minutes to finish, delaying the scheduled final necrological Mass at the Sto. Domingo Church.

For the procedure, the coffin had to be opened. Marshals were strict and prohibited cameramen and photographers from shooting pictures while Abueva worked.

Retouching FPJ

During the process, Abueva carefully applied a material, called Plaster of Paris (which thickens like cement once mixed with water), on top of the actor's face to get the "impressions of his face," the sculptor said.

Poe's face had to be retouched after the procedure because parts of his makeup were erased.

Abueva said he would "preserve" Poe's death mask in fiber glass.

Napoleon Bonaparte, too

A death mask is a common practice in honoring "great men," Abueva said. This was done, too, to Napoleon Bonaparte.

Asked about proposals to elevate Poe among the ranks of National Artists, Abueva said that, based on the actor's contribution to the film industry, Poe was "one of those who are qualified."

"I look forward to him being named as National Artist," he said.

Ancient beliefs

In the ancient world, a death mask—which is an exact model of the face of a dead person cast in plaster, wax or metal from a mold taken from a corpse—played an important part in funerary beliefs and practices.

A death mask was used to cover the face of a corpse to protect the body from evil spirits while it lay in state, according to one belief. Later, the mask was placed in the atrium of the person's house where it was crowned with laurels on his feast day.

The mask was also carried in the funeral processions of the dead man's descendants.

In ancient Egypt, people believed that immortality depended largely on the preservation of the personality of the honored dead.

Wisdom, strength, power

The use of masks seeks to preserve the personality of the dead, especially if the deceased possessed great wisdom, physical strength or power. The creation of funerary masks in some cultures served this purpose.

Other famous persons with death masks are Beethoven, Dante and Lincoln.

2 funerals, one message: Better future

From page A1

"The first time that a massive funeral march was seen was during Ninoy's interment. [This is] just about the second time. The magnitude [of the first] was too great as to even become unbelievable," said Pimentel, who estimated that about a million people turned up for Aquino's funeral.

Pimentel, imprisoned four times by the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos during martial law, said that while Aquino and Poe belonged to two different worlds and generations, their message of hope was "one and the same."

"Ninoy came off trying to tell the people that even if he had to sacrifice his life, a better tomorrow could still come. And FPJ's message is, The dawn of a better life is coming," Pimentel said.

'No historical antecedent'

"Their optimism arose from the fact that the Filipino is worth dying for," he said.

Pimentel observed that Poe was "not as verbally articulate as Ninoy."

"Nevertheless," he said, "the message came loud and clear that if the people will continue to uphold the rule of law, things will turn out right in the end for the people."

But Sen. Edgardo Angara, who joined Poe's family during the necrological rites, refused to equate his funeral with any historical antecedent.

"Nothing is comparable to this. It is a unique event because here, a man who died of natural causes has moved tens of thousands of people to mourning," said Angara, who had served as Poe's chief political adviser.

Comparisons

Those who had witnessed the two wakes at the Sto. Domingo Church said the queues at Poe's wake were considerably longer.

"I was at Ninoy's wake," said Lynda Quiano of Baguio City. "At the time, it only took us 10 minutes to see his body after we got out of a taxi. But now, we had to wait for hours. We would not have gotten in if we were not senior citizens."

The organizers of Poe's wake had created a special line for senior citizens and the disabled.

Even Aquino's youngest sister, former Sen. Tessie Aquino-Oreta, said the funeral march for Poe had apparently drawn more people.

This was her explanation: "The population is bigger now compared to [that in Ninoy's] time. Also, FPJ was an actor. He was an artist, and that was a drawing power in itself. You have the combination of being a cultural icon and a politician." Oreta said.

Asked to compare the atmosphere then and now, Oreta, who marched yesterday from the Sto. Domingo Church to the North Cemetery with San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito, Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, and other leaders of the opposition, said people were visibly angry during Aquino's funeral.

The hero was, after all, felled by an assassin's bullets, while Poe died a natural death.

"But the anger [caused by Ninoy's murder] took quite some time to form," Oreta said. "This is more immediate. The anger here is immediately felt."

Both symbols

If the two funerals can be compared, it's because Poe and Aquino were both symbols, said Willie Borja, 44, a jeepney operator and driver from Quezon City.

According to Borja, who was present at both events, Aquino stood for the people's opposition to Ferdinand Marcos' iron rule. Poe, on the other hand, stood as a hero of the masses and as the symbol of a victim of questionable elections.

"If people could see on CNN that there were this many people who attended the burial, they may wonder, Why did he lose? Maybe something did happen," Borja said. But he also acknowledged the possibility that not all who attended the funeral had voted for the actor.

Borja said the people who joined Aquino's funeral march were very emotional: "*Halos lahat umiiyak* (Almost everyone was crying)."

Political and show biz

He said even the weather seemed to echo the mood because rain poured as the people marched to the Manila Memorial Park in Parañaque.

On the other hand, Borja said, there were hardly any tears during Poe's funeral march. Also, the sun was shining during the event, and the mood turned emotional only when Poe's casket reached the family plot at the North Cemetery in Manila.

But Borja said Poe appeared to be more popular than Aquino, which was why he expected more people to turn up for the actor's funeral.

"Even children know who FPJ is. Only the older people were aware of who Ninoy was," he said.

He also observed that Aquino's funeral was mainly a political one, while Poe's was both a political and a show biz event.

Love, resentment

Pimentel expressed the hope that as the mourning wound down, the message of Poe and Aquino would "sink deeper in the hearts of Filipinos."

He noted that the mourners at both funerals had manifested "love" for either man and "resentment at the persons they thought were responsible for the death of their leaders."

"In the case of Ninoy, the object of hatred was Marcos; in the case of FPJ, the object of ridicule is [President] Gloria [Macapagal-Arroyo]," he said.

According to Pimentel, the differences lay in "the manifestation of grief and love for their fallen idols" and the conditions prevailing in either instance.

Psywar tactics

In Ninoy's time, the conditions were not free compared to the present setup, he said, adding:

"But, of course, there was harassment yesterday. Police prevented more people from the provinces to join the funeral march and [employed] psywar tactics such as [warning of] the possible eruption of violence, which somehow discouraged others to join the march."

Mosul bomb attack kills 18 GIs, 4 Iraqis

MOSUL, Iraq—A guerrilla attack on a tented dining hall at a US base in Iraq killed 18 Americans and four Iraqis in one of the deadliest strikes on Americans since last year's war to oust Saddam Hussein.

US officials initially said a number of rocket and mortar rounds were fired at the base in the northern city of Mosul on Tuesday, but a militant group claimed a suicide bomber was behind the attack, in which a further 72 people were wounded.

"A suicide bomber has not been ruled out," a US Army official said later in Washington.

Giving the latest in a confusing series of casualty updates, the military in Baghdad said 14 US soldiers, four American civilians and four Iraqi security force members were killed.

Fifty-one of the wounded were US military personnel. Of the 72 hurt, 43 were still being treated.

A spokesperson in Mosul said it could take days before a clear picture emerged of what happened and who was killed.

"There's some tedious forensic work to be done. It could be a couple of days," said Capt. Phil Ludvigson, who said it was not clear what had caused the explosion. "Rockets, mortars or any number of things could have caused it."

US President George W. Bush, who warned on Monday that guerrilla bombers were taking a toll, sent his condolences to the families. He called Iraq "a vital mission for peace."

"I know a free Iraq will lead to a more peaceful world," said Bush, who paid a Christmas visit to families of wounded soldiers as a poll showed most Americans now believed the war was not worth fighting.

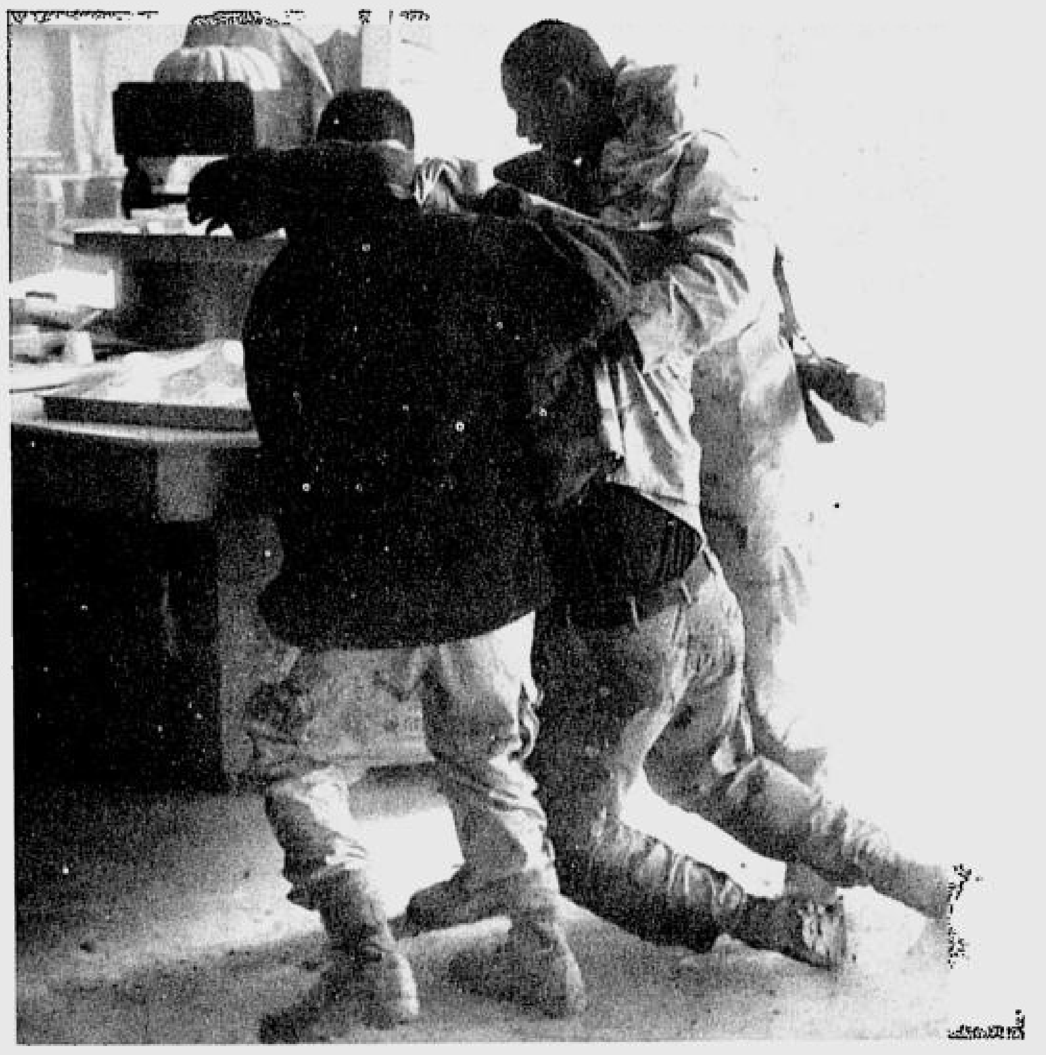
The attack was a reminder of the threat guerrillas pose, six weeks after US troops stormed Falluja to quell a Sunni Arab insurgency before Iraq holds national elections on Jan. 30.

Mosul residents said US forces sealed off areas of the city on Wednesday, including bridges crossing the Tigris river, and carried out raids in a hunt for suspects behind the attack.

"It was a tragic event, but it will not deter us from our mission," said Sgt. Steve Valley, a US spokesperson in Baghdad. "We're all here with the same purpose of ridding this country of these armed thugs and building a democracy."

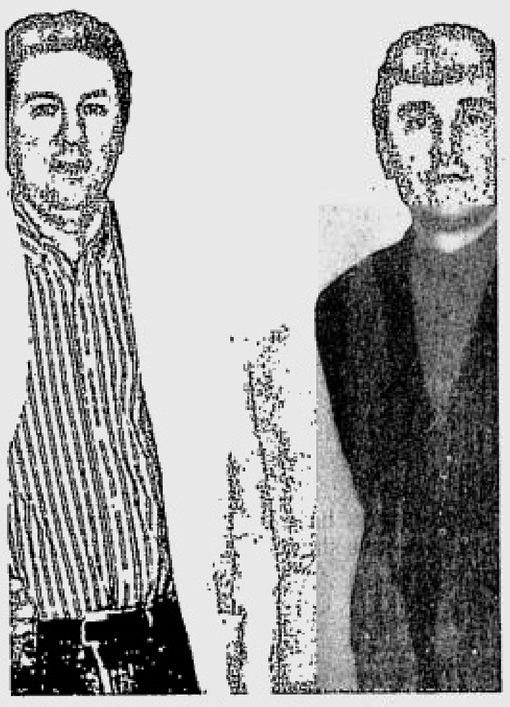
The worst single US military death toll since the war was 17 when two helicopters came down in Mosul late last year.

The new Mosul attack came as British Prime Minister Tony Blair made a surprise visit to Baghdad, vowing guerrillas would lose and the elections would go ahead on time. *Reuters*



US SOLDIERS tend to the wounded after an insurgent mortar attack on a dining facility during lunchtime on FOB Marez in Mosul, Iraq, Dec. 21.

2 reporters held for 4 months freed



MALBRUNOT, right, and Chesnot in an undated photo AP

PARIS—Two French journalists were heading home to France on Wednesday after the end of a four-month hostage ordeal in Iraq which left many unanswered questions about the government's handling of the crisis.

President Jacques Chirac broke off a Christmas vacation in Morocco and returned to France to record an address hailing the release of Georges Malbrunot, 41, and Christian Chesnot, 37, who were seized by Islamic militants on Aug. 20.

Details of their release in Iraq on Tuesday remained sketchy. It was not clear whether the government had made any deal with the kidnappers, and opposition leaders said it would in time have to explain how it had handled the crisis.

"It seems they were treated very well by their captors," Anne-Marie Chesnot, the sister of one of the journalists, told RTL radio. "We know only that they are both okay."

"It's a very beautiful Christmas present, the most beautiful Christmas present you could have," Chesnot's brother Thierry told reporters.

Chirac, whose address was set to be broadcast later in the day, breathed a sigh of relief as France united in celebration.

But he will have to explain why it took a country which opposed the US-led war in Iraq, and says it has strong ties in the Middle East, so long to secure the release.

"When the time is right, the time for explanations will come," said Francois Hollande, leader of the opposition Socialist Party.

"We must ask for explanations about all stages of their detention. Now their freedom has been secured, informing parliament about all the conditions of how the discussions have unfolded since August is the least thing that can be done." *Reuters*

Pfizer says study backs Celebrex safety

DRUGMAKER giant Pfizer Inc. said yesterday a National Institutes of Health study of Alzheimer's patients found that its Celebrex arthritis drug carries no increased cardiovascular risk in the elderly.

Pfizer's painkiller came under fire last week when it was found to carry a higher risk of heart complications in a study of its use in cancer patients. The drug is in the same class as Merck & Co. Inc.'s Vioxx, which was recalled earlier this year because it increased heart risks.

Pfizer said the NIH study's results are consistent with a large body of evidence supporting the cardiovascular safety of Celebrex.

"This is important new information that should be considered by doctors and patients as they evaluate the various treatments for arthritis and pain," said Hank McKinnell, Pfizer chair and CEO.

"Millions of people simply can't get through their day without pain relief. That's why all the emerging information about arthritis medicine—prescription and over-the-counter—must be fully evaluated by the US Food and Drug Administration and other regulatory authorities," he added.

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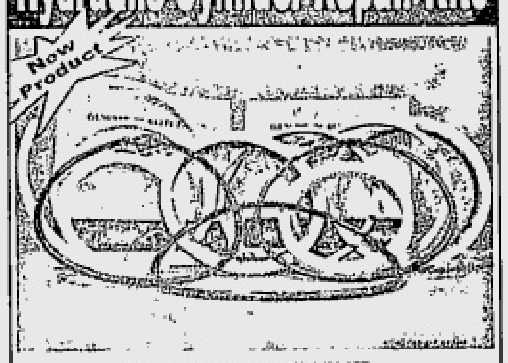

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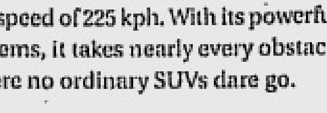

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Washington seeking talks with Iran

TEHRAN—Washington wants to hold direct talks with Tehran, with which it broke ties 24 years ago, to discuss a number of issues including the Islamic state's nuclear program, a senior Iranian security official said on Tuesday.

Hossein Mousavian, one of Iran's chief nuclear negotiators, also said Iran had no objections to European Union efforts to involve Washington in negotiations aimed at dispelling international concerns about Iran's atomic ambitions.

But a Western diplomat in Tehran said talk of Washington joining the nuclear dialogue with Tehran was premature.

EU officials privately acknowledge that their efforts to persuade Tehran to give up sensitive nuclear activities, such as uranium enrichment, have little chance of success without full US support and involvement in the talks.

"The United States wants negotiations with Iran and definitely doesn't like having a mediator in between, even if the Europeans want to mediate," the official IRNA news agency quoted Mousavian as saying.

"But they are after comprehensive and conclusive talks which cover all disputed issues," he said.

US and Iranian officials have held occasional talks in the past on specific issues such as Afghanistan and Iraq. But talks broke down last year when Washington accused Iran of providing shelter for al-Qaida members behind bombings in Saudi Arabia.

"The Europeans have launched massive efforts to bring the United States into the nuclear negotiations," said Mousavian, who is secretary of the foreign policy committee on Iran's Supreme National Security Council.

"We have no objection to the Americans joining the Europeans in this process," he added.

Washington accuses Iran of trying to make atomic arms under the cover of a civil nuclear energy program. Iran denies this.

"If the Americans want to hamper the Iran-EU cooperation, they can be effective and no one can deny it... US interaction with Europe in this process is important from our point of view, nevertheless our partner is Europe not America," Mousavian said.

"I don't reject the possibility of nuclear talks between Iran and the United States, but I cannot predict the future."

The Western diplomat in Tehran said the EU "has been very clear that negotiations would have a much bigger chance of success if the Americans put their shoulders behind it."

But he said skepticism remained high in Washington that Iran was negotiating in good faith rather than trying to buy time to continue with a nuclear arms drive at a later stage.

"We're a long way from the Americans taking a seat at the negotiating table," he said.

US fears that Iran has no intention of giving up a quest for atomic bombs are likely to have been exacerbated on Tuesday by reports from Vienna-based diplomats that Iran is continuing to ready large amounts of uranium for enrichment.

Uranium enrichment is a process that can be used to make fuel for nuclear power reactors or to make atomic warheads.

"The Iranians have decided to continue UF4 (uranium tetrafluoride) production until the end of February," a diplomat told Reuters on condition of anonymity. Two other diplomats in Vienna, where the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is based, confirmed this.

UF4 is the precursor to uranium hexafluoride (UF6), the gas that is fed into centrifuges.

Iran recently pledged to freeze all activities linked to uranium enrichment as a confidence-building gesture. *Reuters*

Teenage sex video sparks furor in India

NEW DELHI—What started as two and half minutes of indiscretion by two teenage schoolchildren has turned in a major scandal which has cracked India's conservative facade and raised serious questions about parenting and sex education.

When a 16-year-old Delhi schoolboy used his phone camera to film his girlfriend performing oral sex on him, he could scarcely have imagined it would not only lead to his arrest but would also provoke intense national and international debate.

The chain of events has shocked tradition-bound India, the land which brought the world the Kama Sutra but where these days couples do not even kiss in public.

Police were alerted after the film clip ended up on the Internet auction site Baazee.com, owned by US giant eBay, and arrested its chief, an American citizen.

New questions about sex, privacy, technology and the legal system are being asked.

"We have been a very closed society and although sex has been around, it was always under the carpet so far," said Radhika Sharma, a mother of two teenage girls. "So this is certainly a desperate wake-up call."

The story surfaced a little over a month ago when the teenagers were expelled from a prestigious Delhi school after he was caught circulating the video, shot on his mobile phone camera.

Soon the images were circulating on the thriving underground porn market and selling on disc for as little as a dollar.

A 23-year-old student from a top engineering college the allegedly got in on the act, putting the clip up for sale on a popular online auction site. As word spread and the story hit the front pages of Indian newspapers, the student, the schoolboy and the owner of the Internet site were all arrested.

The scandal is just one of many controversies in recent months that signal that India's conservative veneer—inspired by centuries of Victorian morals spread under British colonial rule—may be fading under the impact of Western influences and a technological revolution, experts say. *Reuters*

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WHITE CHRISTMAS IN CHINA Cyclists ride along a quiet tree-lined street once typical of old Beijing near the east gate of the Forbidden City, Dec. 22, as the first snow of the winter hit the capital. More snow is forecast in the coming days, with chances high that many parts of China will enjoy a White Christmas. AFP

Hostage-takers steal $39M from Northern Ireland bank

BELFAST—A gang held the families of two Northern Ireland bank officials hostage for 24 hours before stealing about $39 million in one of Britain's biggest robberies, police said on Tuesday.

The employees were forced to hand over the money from a cash center at the headquarters of Northern Bank in central Belfast after close of business on Monday by raiders who had taken over their homes on Sunday night.

Northern Bank is Northern Ireland's largest retail bank and is owned by National Australia Bank.

"Two families have suffered great trauma as a result of the actions of these criminals," Northern Ireland's Assistant Chief Constable Sam Kinkaid told reporters.

Police said they were investigating whether one of Northern Ireland's paramilitary groups, which remain heavily involved in crime despite observing ceasefires in the province's long-running sectarian conflict, had been involved in the raid.

"Clearly this is a well-organized crime, there's absolutely no doubt about that," said Kinkaid.

"Whether it is in any way associated with paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland, we haven't sufficient information for us to make any assessment on that at present."

Britain's biggest robbery was a 1987 break-in at a safe deposit center in London when 60 million pounds was stolen. In 1983, 26 million pounds was taken in a raid on a Brinks-Mat vault at London's Heathrow airport.

National Australia Bank said in a statement to the Australian Stock Exchange about 20 million pounds was stolen.

"The theft is covered by self-insurance, and as such, National Australia Bank... will bear the impact of any losses arising from the theft," it said.

Northern Bank has 95 branches in the British-ruled province.

Earlier this month, Denmark's Danske Bank agreed to buy Northern Bank and Dublin-based National Irish Bank from National Australia Bank for 10.4 billion Danish crowns ($1.87 billion).

The theft was not expected to have any material impact on the sale of the two banks to Danske, National Australia Bank said.

"Most importantly, all staff involved in the theft are safe and are receiving appropriate care and support by Northern Bank and the police in Northern Ireland," it said. *Reuters*

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Darfur peace talks suspended

ABUJA—Sudan's government and Darfur rebels suspended faltering peace talks on Tuesday and the African Union urged both sides to stop fighting to allow negotiations to resume in January.

The break up of peace talks in the Nigeria came as British aid agency Save the Children announced it was pulling all 350 of its staff out of Darfur after the killing of four of its staff and renewed clashes in the western Sudanese region.

Nigerian President and AU chair Olusegun Obasanjo spoke to rebels and government delegates at a ceremony in Abuja to close the talks, after meeting both sides to urge them to halt their military offensives.

"The talks will be formally closed today... to resume sometime in January if the Sudan government complies with the AU chair's request for them to stop the offensive and withdraw their troops to their former positions," said Tajeddin Bashir Niam of the rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM).

In Washington, the United States called on Secretary General Kofi Annan to visit Darfur again and the UN leader said the Security Council should consider new steps, such as sanctions, to stop the violence in the troubled western region.

"We will be engaging with the secretary general on what steps the Security Council might take," US representative Stuart Holliday told reporters after council consultations.

"I also think it might be time for him to actually personally see the situation in Darfur again as he did last summer," Holliday said, adding that he had not spoken to Annan about it. The secretary-general's last trip resulted in new agreements for humanitarian access.

The head of the Sudan government delegation Majzoub al-Khalifa said talks had reached a "successful end and we are all committed to the talks again."

He added that Sudan had accepted in principle Obasanjo's proposals to observe an April ceasefire and move back to positions held at the time at the truce was signed. Rebels had already pledged to observe the much-violated ceasefire. *Reuters*

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EDITORIALS

Spectacle

FROM A DISTANCE, the throngs that turned out to bury Fernando Poe Jr. appeared what prognostications said they would be—not only ardent but also adulatory and noteworthy for endurance. In fact, they made for a spectacle, the sort that gives foreign (and therefore culturally different) observers pause; or for an epic movie, the sort that sweeps the viewer along as frame upon breathless frame unreels, sound and action melding in raging movement.

Raging but, because of disparate persuasions, conducive to petering out. And also, because ideologically unorganized, lacking the force of an idea whose time has come. Authorities must certainly be grateful that the tidal wave of grief portentously looming for the past days descended with a weight not much more than the metaphorical extended sigh. But then the bereaved family as represented by Poe's widow had consistently, admirably, refused to bite the bait slyly dangled by adventurers, at the same time maintaining a frosty hauteur toward which Malacañang could only be diffident. (Imagine what could have been if Susan Roces behaved otherwise.)

Casting about for comparisons, mourners and assorted politicians hark back to the 1983 funeral march that escorted the assassinated Benigno S. Aquino Jr. to his grave—a swollen river of movement made seamless by a unity of purpose: to defy Ferdinand Marcos; to show, despite the overarching terrorism of his dictatorship, that public outrage was now breaching the banks; to declare that enough was enough. Without intending to gainsay the perfervid quality of yesterday's march, there is no parallel point on which to ruminate but the general thread of sorrow running through it.

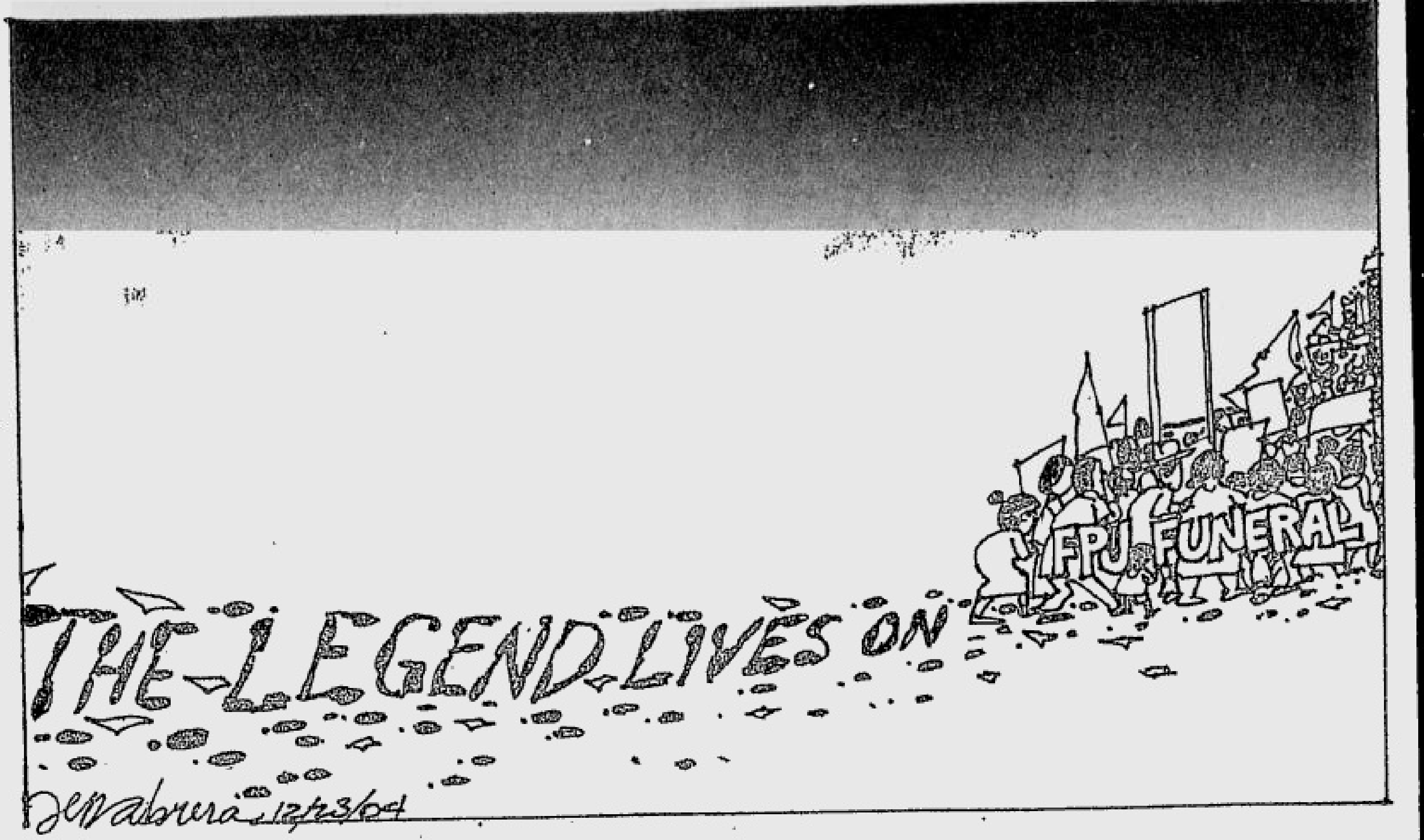
To be sure, the memory of Poe's coffin on a carriage pulled by a horse—part of the spectacle, apparently in keeping with the now-mythical image of "Da King" as a horseman, but now imbued with a certain measure of insensitivity considering the terrible effort that the horse was compelled to make—is now part of the national imagination, as is the memory of the flatbed truck bearing Aquino's coffin. But unfortunately, the rowdies who yesterday comported themselves solely as voyeurs (hanging from trees and trampling plants and niches, as much moved by a morbid curiosity as schadenfreude), mugged for the TV cameras, and damned the organizers' assiduous planning and grappled as heatedly for space as for whatever giveaways they could grasp—even those who, incredibly, were seen waving the Stars and Stripes in the manner of activists waving the red flags of protest—took away from the proceedings what could have been a unifying theme: the supposed widespread anger at the alleged cheating that robbed Poe of the presidency. (Then again, why shouldn't they wave the Stars and Stripes? Even the mighty US government sent condolences to the Poes.)

Panic

IT WOULD SEEM then that Malacañang had switched to panic mode, and President Macapagal-Arroyo and her coterie of advisers were caught in the throes of overreaction. How inelegant. Imagine the Commander in Chief marking the 69th anniversary of the Armed Forces on Tuesday, not on the grounds of Camp Aguinaldo where she could have regally trooped the line and inspected her troops, but in the fortress also known as the Palace. And imagine her bidding her soldiers to "be by my side," like she were crooning a love song to them, as though they were not obliged to do so.

This unseemly behavior is entirely of a piece with the flurry of conciliatory gestures that Malacañang had made since news broke that the principal contender to Ms Arroyo's post had given up his ghost. Politely rebuffed by Poe family members on its amazing efforts to get on their good side, Malacañang had turned tail and proceeded to scare itself silly with the man's ghost. Is this any way for a strong republic to proceed?

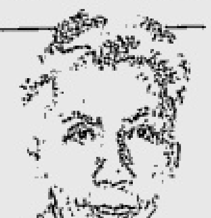
Now the question arises as to why the apparent panic in Malacañang reached such surprising proportions ("very strict" inspections and access controls, "upgraded" security arrangements, "additional troops," not to mention ferrying Palace employees by barge). Why the defensive stance toward the supposed anger over its alleged dirty tricks during the presidential election? What is it hiding?



Revisiting Christmases past

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado



THE GRIME-STREAKED beggar at the church door wouldn't budge. Misa de Gallo had just ended. If delayed, I'd miss that overbooked flight for Bangkok. As a "martial law refugee," Thailand was my United Nations duty station for 17 years. Kids were flying in from US schools to join us for Christmas.

Shifting his battered can, the beggar persisted. "Don't you remember me?" Seeing the blank look in my eyes, he murmured: "We were classmates in grade school. I am Candido…"

Memory scraped away the wrinkles, the dirt and in-between years. We had played *patintero* and other games of childhood. We built model airplanes and sailed toy boats. During vacations, we'd swim in nearby resorts.

Today? *Tiene cara de hambre*. "You have the face of hunger," the orphan boy tells the Crucified in the film classic: "Marcelino, Pan Y Vino."

We barely managed snatches of conversation. Airline schedules are unyielding. Couldn't I have dropped, into his tin cup, more than what was hurriedly fished out of a shirt pocket? I asked as the immigration officer waved us on.

We were all invited to journey to Bethlehem, including those with numbered accounts, cigarette tax break bonanzas and illegal logging take. But like my beggared classmate, many wearily limp to "the City of David" with empty tin cans. Billionaires here lodge in "gated enclaves" while many lack frugal livelihoods. "There's no room in the inn."

Yet, "Christmas is the only time I know of when men and women seem, by one consent, to open their shut-up hearts freely," Charles Dickens wrote in 1843. Like the reengineered Ebnezer Scrooge, they "think of people below them, not as another race of creatures bound on other journeys, but as fellow passengers to the grave."

I never saw my beggar-friend again. But he forms part of past Christmas images. As the years slip by, these mental snapshots remain. But revisiting them, one finds that a bittersweet tone now overlays the montage.

The images include the kindnesses of friends one now rarely sees. I rushed out to talk with a pediatrician, glimpsed midway through an Advent Mass. Dr. Mike Celdran lavished care on my now grown-up kids. I wanted him to meet my lawyer-daughter and her doctor husband, visiting for Christmas. But he had left.

"That season comes wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated/The bird of dawning singeth all night long," one reads in "Hamlet." The overseas Filipino workers too were singing carols like "Ang Pasko Ay Sumapit" at the SVD Fathers' Verbiti conference room on Christmas Day. Did they sing the old Spanish carols like "Nacio Nacios Pastores"? I don't remember now.

Verbiti is tucked close to Hadrian's wall in Rome. It was festooned with star lanterns, *belen*, even *lechon*. But corrosive loneliness contorted the faces of many in that room, separated from kith and kin, in "this "hallowed and gracious time." One glimpsed in the tears slipping past tightly closed eyes, the economic diaspora's costs. Hidden behind those hefty foreign exchange remittances are: pain, separation, alienation, trauma even. *Tiene cara de hambre.*

Christmas, the Filipino SVD fathers told their expat flock, is "Emmanuel—God with us" in the dark night, even of despair. "There are no more unvisited places in our lives."

Illnesses in absent family are shattering for expats. We trudged to the Crib in Gereja Theresia (St. Therese's Church), behind Jakarta's giant mall Sarjna. Half a world away, alone in a Los Angeles ICU room, an economic diaspora statistic—my younger brother—lay dying.

In January, Jesse phoned. Life is fragile, he said. We don't know when we will see each other again. Let's meet in Cebu with our then 86-year-old mother.

He flew in from LA. Our only sister from Toronto arrived. And we joined in from Bangkok. We had a laughter-filled week. July, our mother went. "Please. No heroic measures," our sister-in-law soberly cautioned the cardiac team that rushed in. And by December, Jesse was gone, too.

The Child of Bethlehem enables us to see beyond the grave. "Death is not the extinguishing of life," the Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore wrote. "It is putting out the lamp because dawn has come."

"The people who sit in darkness have seen a great light," Isaiah writes. "Kings shall (stream) to the brightness of thy rising." From our third floor flat in Bangkok, we'd watch this Thai lady slip into the deserted courtyard of the Holy Redeemer Church. Draped in the Advent dawn's soft darkness, she'd pray before the picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Help—until Misa de Gallo, introduced by Filipino workers, would start. Her silhouette brought Isaiah's lines to mind:

That silhouette, like the image of a Muntinlupa prisoner, forms part of our Christmases past. Clad in sweat-stained detainee togs, the prisoner wouldn't budge. If delayed, I'd miss a dinner appointment. Seeing the blank look in my eyes, he murmured: "Don't you remember me? We were playmates in Cebu. My name is Policarpio…"

There is, we're told, a geography of the heart. Like the Magi, we travel its byways, not merely from place to place, but from grace to grace. It is a search for what endures amid the transient. Without fail, we find it in those with *cara de hambre*.

"And they found the Child with Mary his mother," the story goes. *Venite adoremus* (Come let us adore him).

* * *

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A very cruel year

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

IT'S enough to take the word "merry" from Christmas, the spectacle of death ravaging the country. Even the Christmas songs seem a little tired this year. I heard some of them issuing from the church near where I live, and the good cheer they were trying to convey seemed thoroughly out of place. As were the lights that blinked from the windows of houses.

I guess there's no stopping Christmas in this country. And I guess we owe it to the kids to keep our spirits up despite the horrendous vexations we've had to face this year. But I wish we'd also teach them not to be oblivious of the pain around them and express Christmas spirit less in plunging into revelry and more in commiserating with others.

This year has been an especially cruel year. On a personal note, this year has seen the deaths of five members of my wife's family. Chief of them her father, my father-in-law, with whom I had shared many a drink and story. He died in Los Angeles last July. I had always thought he would live forever. He died at 91, an unripe old age where he was coming from. I saw him three years ago in the United States and he still remembered the lyrics of old songs to the word, and sang them enthusiastically with the aid of libation. After a battle with prostate cancer for almost a couple of decades, he finally said, heck, might as well go.

At about the time he was being buried, I ended up in St. Luke's over an improbable affliction—gallstones. I had never had the symptoms of gallstones before. I had never doubled up and gasped breathlessly from the pain of it. I had had cases of indigestion and gas, but that was it. But from out of the blue, it struck. I wrote about it at the time, or shortly after I had the operation. Which was pretty sudden: the thing began to bother me dawn of Sunday. By Monday I felt like I had landed in the torture chambers of the Inquisition. By the time they operated on me next day, the damn thing was about to burst. In the nick of time, as they say. My enemies would agree this has been a most cruel year.

At about the same time this happened, my brother's wife, Milen, was operated on for a mass in her head. Fortunately, it proved benign and lodged between her brain and cranium, which made the operation a little less complicated. No head operation, as the doctor said, is ever uncomplicated. The operation proved a complete success, which is a strong argument for the existence of God.

Before these my wife lost an aunt on her father side and a cousin. The aunt died from disease, the cousin from a car accident, as he was driving his family home in Dumaguete on Easter Sunday. And not long after that, my wife lost a couple of other aunts, one also a sister of her father and the other a more distant one.

Friends have died, some have gotten seriously sick. All of the artists who died this year, which I wrote about some weeks ago, I knew personally. The only two I didn't know that well were George Canseco and Zeneida Amador, though I had met them at one time or another. But I did know Lito Tiongson, Ding Nolledo and Nick Joaquin well enough.

I had thought five was already too much when suddenly Fernando Poe Jr. slumped on the table one fine night while at a party and went on to meet his Maker. It was enough to convince a friend of mine that there was something to be said for my theory that artists died in pairs. Six to date. For reasons God only knows, artists seem the most endangered species in this country—politicians are the safest. At least from the threat of disease, not from the threat of bullets. From the threat of bullets, provincial journalists qualify for the dubious honor. This year saw a whole tribe of them slaughtered across the country.

Even before FPJ could be carried to his final resting place, another tragedy struck. This time it was Jose de Venecia's daughter, KC, who perished in a blaze that hit his house. KC was trapped in the bathroom while the fire raged around her. Joe and Gina were inconsolable, and I can only offer my deepest condolences to them. There are no words to express how a parent must feel at this absolute loss.

Some weeks ago, I brought a musician friend to UST to the same doctor that operated on my sister-in-law. He needed a second opinion on his 10-year-old daughter who was diagnosed with cancer of the brain stem. The doctor, Ed Tan, a man whose brilliance is matched only by his magnanimity, reached his conclusion almost as soon as he saw the X-rays. It was brain stem glioma, he said, and unfortunately it was inoperable. It was not that uncommon, he said. It was a cancer cell that resided in some babies and for some reason tended to manifest itself at that age and in the brain stem. The doctor gently admonished my friend, as my friend broke into sobs, to just try to make the best with what time he has left with his kid. My heart broke.

Then, only a few weeks ago, three storms pounded the Prelature of Infanta, causing mountains to crumble and fall down on men, women and children. Especially children, their bones crushed by the logs that hurtled along with the loosed earth and floodwater. A priest died there, after rescuing a barangay from impending doom. These deaths do not just elicit lament, they incite anger. The kids in particular would not be dead if the logs hadn't fallen down on them, and those logs would not have fallen down on them if the Department of Environment and Natural Resources had not given people the license to cut them. This tragedy was not wrought by the hand of God, it was wrought by the hand of greed.

On top of everything, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo became President this year. I did not say won as President. There's a difference.

This has been one very cruel year.

KC sent off with balloons and butterflies

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

FOR Speaker Jose de Venecia and wife Gina, the problem was how to cope with the sudden death of their daughter KC, who was plucked from life at the tender age of 16 by a hideous fire that gutted their residence. Over the past five days, hundreds of people from all over the country and even abroad streamed into the Santuario de San Antonio in Forbes Park to condole with the De Venecias in their hour of grief, but letting go of KC was still the problem. Spiritual leaders—from Bro. Eddie Villanueva to Fr. Sonny Ramirez—and friends (that included President Macapagal-Arroyo and former President Aquino) advised them to let go of KC and entrust her fully to the Lord.

* * *

Yesterday morning, the grieving family, joined by relatives and friends led by GMA and the First Gentleman, Vice President Noli de Castro and Senate President and Mrs. Franklin Drilon, did just that. After the funeral Mass concelebrated by Bishop Antonio Tobias of Novaliches, Msgrs. Nico Bautista, Augusto Laban and Jaime Boquiren, and Fr. Tony Rosales, came the intimate eulogies from family and friends that were like a letting-off of steam. Then everyone was ushered outside into the gardens where photos of KC in different stages of her life were mounted. To the singing by Lea Salonga and Donita of "Happiness," KC's favorite song, she was "lifted up" to heaven with the symbolic gesture of the assembled crowd releasing pink and white balloons into the air. This was followed by the release of 500 butterflies into the trees, recalling Psalm 55:6: "I said, Oh that I had the wings…I would fly away and be at rest." "Goodbye, KC, goodbye," said the crowd which then burst into applause. By then, few eyes were dry. Then the immediate family left to bring the urn draped in hot-pink silk, that bore KC's ashes, to the crypt below the church. As Gina told relatives over lunch later, "There I made my goodbye to KC" and she felt better. The tautness of grief lifted from her face and JDV's, as the peace brought about by the acceptance of God's will descended on them.

The beautiful church and garden ceremonies for KC's send-off to heaven were orchestrated by Gina's sisters, Marichu Maceda, Chona Ampil and Bechay Nakpil, Gina's daughter Carissa Cruz and friend Yeyette Albert. The butterflies were supplied by Marichu's son, Edmond Maceda, who began breeding them for a hobby, but lately as a profession (he did a butterfly house for his mom and for Camp John Hay and is doing one in Boracay).

* * *

In his eulogy, the Speaker said many indeed had asked him and Gina to let KC "fly like a dove on eagles' wings" so she can join their departed relatives in the great beyond. Referring briefly to the two funerals of KC and "our friend" (FPJ), JDV committed a blooper by listing his 81-year-old mother-in-law, Azucena Vera Perez, among the departed relatives, but son Chris quickly corrected it, to everyone's amusement. "*Rindido na si Joe* (Joe is very tired)," said someone, but it helped break the tension inside the church.

* * *

JDV recalled that he has been through many setbacks in his life, including his financial debacle in the Middle East in the late '70s, where he had to worry about getting 5,000 co-workers out of harm's way, and his loss in the presidential elections in 1998. "But nothing can compare to the grief of losing a daughter so young and so unaffected," he rued, noting their tragic helplessness in rescuing her as she was suffocated by smoke and burned by fire. What comforts JDV, however, was the revelation of Fr. Bernie Carpio of Don Bosco School that a week before she died, KC made a general confession with him. Don't grieve, said the priest, "your daughter is in heaven now."

* * *

But such is life's mystery that out of tragedy comes something good. JDV revealed that GMA and Drilon have agreed to his proposal that some P25 million to P30 million of the new budget be used to purchase critical fire-fighting equipment such as asbestos suits and grill cutters, for at least the big cities. In fact this morning, a demonstration will be made by the Subic Fire Department of its modern equipment at the Dusit Nikko Hotel in Makati, and hopefully this would entice that city to invest in them.

* * *

Joe and Gina's 18-year-old son, Christopher, proved he was a chip off the old block by eulogizing his sister, "my best friend and the woman in my life, who made me a fighter just like her," in an easy extemporaneous style. Chris revealed that he and KC had made a pact to go to Las Vegas for her 21st birthday and bust all their savings there, but it was not meant to be. KC's best friend at International School, a 10th Grade student named Harvey Alumisin, tearfully recalled their crazy escapades and how they had their photo taken last Thursday, just hours before she died.

* * *

The US-based Leslie de Venecia Norton, JDV's daughter by an earlier marriage, recounted the interesting circumstances of the De Venecias' "blended family" which was really composed of three separate families. If JDV is the master of the win-win solution and the super-peacemaker, he obviously got his training in his complex family structure. KC's elder half-brother, Felipe Cruz III, talked about how his favorite baby sister must now be changing the way heaven runs.

Actress Kris Aquino, one of KC's *ninangs* in baptism, admitted that she had not been such a good *ninang* to KC over the years as her career took off. But curiously, the night KC died, Kris sent her a Christmas gift just before the fire broke out. She also recalled how she spoke on the phone with Gina de Venecia that night and the latter told her, "*Mabigat ang pakiramdam ko.*" Kris promised KC that now that she's no longer around to bring joy to her parents, she (Kris) will try to help them learn to smile again.

From an old Christmas story

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

"ARE you ready?" asked his wife who was standing by the door. Concha handed the general a plastic bag. "Use my car, okay? I insist. It's safer." She was almost whispering.

"Of course," he assured his wife. "Just tell the guests I was suddenly summoned to headquarters and will be back before sundown. Tell my sisters… They'll understand. I'm sure many of them will still be around for supper." He looked around for his daughter, but Amelia had gone back to the living room to mingle with the guests. It was as if she did not want to see her father slip away. Such moments she usually left to her mother to handle.

The general bussed his wife on the cheek then boarded the car. Two men were with him.

The one-and-a-half-hour ride to Bulacan was smooth. The general was alone in the backseat. He stretched his neck, pulled back his head and put on his dark glasses. He told the driver to turn off the air conditioner and open the windows. He liked the wind on his face. The men with him stopped their conversation thinking the general wanted to doze off. But the general was wide awake, his eyes were wide open.

The expressway was practically empty and the car was running at very high speed. Through the open windows the general could see the fields, the lamp posts, the houses, the trees streaming past him and he felt like the car was slicing through it all. The highway was like the Red Sea parting, he thought. He felt small and a little overwhelmed.

The general had not seen Augusto for more than four years. The last time he saw him was a few months before the dictator—the old dog, he called him—was toppled. That was during the preparations for the 1986 snap elections.

That time Augusto and the general met secretly in a posh apartment in Manila. He was a colonel then, and Augusto, said to be a high-ranking official of the underground communist movement, was rumored to have been killed in an encounter with government troops in the Caraballo mountains in Bulacan. It was quite a reunion for the brothers, with Augusto having a good laugh and quoting the ailing dictator himself: "Rumors about my death are extremely exaggerated."

Everyone knew the general had this brother. This never jeopardized his promotion. In fact, this thing had been used time and again—by both the old regime and the new one—to plead for what the general referred to as "so-called unity." Worse, sometimes, one side or the other in the armed conflict would hint at having on their side, "the better brother." This pained him so.

The general preferred to recall the little things. He remembered exactly what day it was when Augusto almost drowned in the Tabucan river in Iloilo where they grew up. That was on a Palm Sunday. He was 15 and Augusto was 10. The big boys were having fun in the river. The small boys were shooed away. But Augusto decided to show off and tried swimming across the river by himself. He never made it to the other side. Somewhere in the middle of the river, he started to bob up and down, he was drowning and gasping for breath. The big boys fished him out and pumped water out of him. What an embarrassment he was to his big brother.

The last time the brothers visited that river together was more than 25 years ago in the afternoon of Christmas Day. Emmanuel Santos was a fresh graduate of the military academy then and Augusto was still in college doing anthropology.

"We're almost there, sir," the driver said. "But you have to tell me where to turn, sir." The general took out a piece of paper on which he had written the instructions given him. In about 10 minutes they were in the place. "Stay in the car," he ordered his two men, "but be alert.

The general picked up the plastic bag and went out of the car. He walked a few steps then took out a white handkerchief and held it with his left hand. He pretended to wipe his forehead with the handkerchief. A man wearing a baseball cap emerged from somewhere and asked, "Are you from Managua?" It was a code. "Yes, I am from Managua," the general answered.

The man wearing a baseball cap led him to a hut by the river. Augusto was there alone, waiting for him. "Manong Em," Augusto exclaimed as he embraced the general who was very tall. The general did not say a word. He buried his face in his brother's thick black hair, he held him tightly for many seconds and rocked him from side to side. He inhaled him. Augusto smelled of the river, the brown fields and laundry soap.

"Let's sit down," Augusto said, pulling two bamboo benches. The general's eyes were following Augusto's hands.

"I brought you this," the general said. "Ham. I sliced them myself last night. Concha and Amelia send their love."

"How are they, Manong?" Augusto asked.

"Oh, still the career women…but we've grown closer over the years. And your…?"

"Roja is fine, after that bout with malaria."

They were by themselves in the hut by the river for about 30 minutes. Except for the gust of December wind, there was not a stir on the outside. The brothers were seated by the window that looked out to the flowing water and the wide expanse of craggy fields. They spoke in a low voice but twice or thrice they broke into peals of laughter which the wind caught and carried to the open sky and far away to the Caraballo mountains.

* * *

Makabuluhang Pasko! Given the series of recent disasters, this Christmas season should be a liberating one for most of us, for we need not prepare for the usual gift-giving and merry-making for ourselves and those dear to us. It's clear, so very clear, where our Christmas energies should go.

* * *

Send comments to cerespd@info.com.ph

A Christmas story

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

OVERLOOKING a little valley on the outskirts of Davao is a little rubber plantation. The view from this modest piece of property is attractive though a little sad—for the destruction of the countryside in the vicinity of the plantation is just a matter of time. The uprooting of greenery to make way for subdivisions is relentless.

In the middle of the plantation stands a little wooden house, the materials of which—wood from rubber trees—tell a story typical of the frustration conscientious citizens face when dealing with the agencies of our Republic. Not just the wood, actually; the whole plantation itself is a testament to the shortcomings (if one wants to use a relatively kind word) of our society. Let's talk of the plantation, first. Then the house.

The plantation is owned by Mrs. _____, a resident of Davao for nearly 40 years now. She is an exceedingly slender, soft-spoken woman of 60 or so years. She wears glasses, has white hair (none of that denial of elderliness which afflicts so many women of her age), is an artist by profession and definitely a cultivated person.

Her father served as a judge and when she was small, they moved from province to province, depending on where her father would be assigned. They stayed longest in Iloilo where the war overtook them, and where she received her education. Sometime after the war, the family settled in Davao where her father, like so many others, found a small measure of prosperity by cultivating land. In the mid-'50s, her father died. His will specified that she was to be given the title to the little rubber plantation and some other pieces of land.

But she was not informed of this. She went on with her life, marrying, then separating from an Englishman by whom she had three children—two sons and a daughter. Her eldest son died tragically while climbing Mount Apo, where he is buried. Her daughter has become a scientist and is struggling to get the grants necessary to pursue her fieldwork on forest fauna for her doctorate. Her other son, the youngest, finished at UP and now works for a desktop publishing firm in the United Kingdom.

She has always lived modestly; money has never been easy to come by, but she managed to educate her children and own a small home in Davao City, where she could paint and engage in environmental activism—one of her most passionate advocacies being the preservation of Mount Apo, which is suffering from the effects of a government geothermal project.

Her life was rocked when her sister—with whom she has not been particularly close—told her around 16 years ago that her father had left her properties. Due to some financial difficulties, her sister had to sell some land, which required Mrs. _____'s consent. It turned out she was part-owner of the land in question. It became apparent that there were other smallholdings in her name, too: the fruits and income from which her sister had been enjoying for 40 years.

When Mrs. _____ found out that her father's legacy had been withheld from her for nearly half a century, and would have been withheld God knows how much longer if necessity hadn't made her sister admit she had the land, Mrs. _____ decided to fight to gain custody of the land that was rightfully hers.

Just one case—on the rubber plantation—took seven years and this was promptly appealed by her sister, thus further prolonging Mrs. _____'s agony. Other cases remain unresolved, delayed by foot-dragging attorneys and judges (who turned out to be the neighbors of her sister or who were reassigned), and by mysterious rulings which seemed to have little to do with the law and more with behind-the-scene interventions.

But at least she was able to take possession of the rubber plantation. A *majordomo* and his wife, who faithfully worked for her sister for decades only to be relieved of their duties the moment her sister felt they were a little too old, are helping Mrs. _____ administer the property. "I don't know what I could have done without them," she says. The couple seems happy working once more on the land they know so well—for an employer who considers them partners instead of mere hirelings.

When she took over the land, she had some unhealthy rubber trees cut down. When she tried to sell the lumber, she was harassed by the local office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, which sent inspectors to berate her for not having secured a permit to cut down the trees, even insinuating that she would face penalties if she tried to sell the logs—although, of course, for a small consideration, all the difficulties could be made to vanish.

She would not bribe them; she couldn't stick the logs in the ground and order them to grow leaves once again, which is what the DENR seemed to want her to do. So she built a little house.

It was on the balcony of that little house that I spent an afternoon with Mrs. _____, who had invited friends to visit her. This was eight years ago. This is how I heard the story of the house and her land.

She talked of many things that afternoon. Of justice and how it is so easily denied. Of personal tragedies and how it is so important, and so difficult to move on and retain one's faith in one's fellow human beings. She talked with wisdom and compassion, and most of all, gratitude: for those, like the *majordomo* and his wife, who have made a difference in her life; for the small blessing in recovering the plantation, which offers hope of an improved financial standing for her, when most other people experience the opposite as they approach old age. I remember her at Christmastime, because her story is like so many others, and yet so different in its happy ending.

Different Christmas

YOUNG BLOOD

Roehl Niño Bautista

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

IS it just me, or is this year's Christmas indeed different?

I haven't yet felt the glow and excitement that usually engulfs my being once the 100-day countdown till Christmas begins. Few houses have Christmas decorations, and it's December, and the brightness that I used to see outside my bedroom window in past Decembers is nowhere yet. I remember reminding my Mom about putting up the Christmas décor after All Souls' Day. But until two weeks ago, there was no sign of the cute little pine tree on top of the table in our home near my school, or of the 6-feet Christmas tree in our house in Novaliches.

Christmas has always been a much-awaited day for most people, and ever since I was a kid, I have always looked forward to it with much anticipation as a big celebration. And I still have many recollections of how it was then.

COD, a department store in Cubao (it has already closed shop), would deck a portion its façade with a "presentation" depicting a Christmas scene. Its uniqueness attracted people from all walks of life, from different parts of the metropolis, who trooped to Cubao by the hundreds, night after night during the whole Yuletide season just to watch it. For years, it was definitely a Christmas event in Metro Manila.

I remember that COD would start putting up its yearly "presentation" in October, and "put on the show" starting late November. Then it was gone. The next thing I knew was something similar was being done in Greenhills. Every year, on my birthday, which is the 28th of December, my father would hie the whole family and my cousins off to Greenhills to watch it. He would also bring us to the "Disney on Ice" at the Big Dome, which all of us—kids and adults alike—really enjoyed. We would watch the skaters do their stuff, performing on ice the different Disney classics. We would stand underneath the giant tree and take some pictures of my cousins. After the show, we would eat at a very good restaurant and watch the COD show later on. I really loved those moments, and even though I'm already 14, I miss those old times.

Now, we have Policarpio Street in Mandaluyong, where residents fill their front gates with Christmas lights and decorations, thus becoming a "tourist destination" of sorts during the Christmas season. I feel that the blinking lights match with the cold Christmas breeze. But, somehow, the glitter—not only of the lights at Policarpio and on the enormous pine tree—and the usual joy of the season seem to be fading.

I pause to think about what has happened to this once merry time of the year. Then it hits me—the economy, the unstable economy is adding wrinkles instead of laugh lines on almost everyone's face. This is aggravated by our so-called leaders who would rather come up with short-term goals and temporary solutions for long-term problems. Congress has allowed itself every conceivable distraction to keep itself from passing important bills. Its members would rather make sure of getting their individual shares of the pork barrel and sit pretty in their cozy chairs.

I'm not putting the blame on the government. It just contributes to making Christmas worse than ever, with the price of basic necessities continually going up and its officials doing nothing about this.

My Christmas this year might not be as dazzling as the ones I had previously; but there are many others whose Christmas will be dim, dark and painfully cold. For nature has taken revenge for the abuse by humans of its gifts. The recent calamity that killed hundreds of people, destroyed properties and deprived thousands more of their livelihood, has taken away from them the joy of Christmas. Never will their Christmas be the same ever again.

As Christmas draws near, I am still hoping for a big celebration. Even without the school party and with the dwindling number of carolers, Dec. 25 will come, whether we like it or not. I'm not pessimistic about Christmas, but it is really different. Something is wrong, and this should be corrected. Yuletide is for everyone. It should spread cheer among people, it should raise new hopes of a brighter tomorrow for the nation. I wish that things will be again what they used to be, and as they should be.

Roehl Niño Bautista, 14, is a third year student and associate managing editor for Tanglaw, the school paper of Claret School of Quezon City.

'Perfect Christmas'

Jose Ramon N. Quintos

CHRISTMAS, for all the merry-making, gift-giving and avowals of love, never fails to make me lonely. As far as I can remember, I have always yearned for a different kind of love—with a twist as romantic as that in the Christmas movie "Love Actually."

Every year, after the traditional Christmas gathering at my mother's ancestral home, I end up wondering about the special girl whom I am going to meet someday one way or another. I try to imagine the texture of her hands within the solitary dream world that is my mind. I try to listen to the timbre of her voice as I close my eyes, further retreating into the realm of the unconscious. In the loneliness of moments such as these, I console myself by thinking about that perfect Christmas.

What is the perfect Christmas? Jose Mari Chan eloquently captures this dream of mine with the lyrics of one of his great songs. Indeed, an ideal celebration of Christmas does not wholly depend on where you celebrate it or what gifts you receive though, sadly, many people measure the meaning of Christmas thus. The perfect Christmas, from a romantic yet truly Christian, point-of-view, is an expression of our genuine, selfless love.

The treasures of Christmas are striking in their simplicity. If one is fortunate enough to come across Christmases as vividly depicted in Jose Mari Chan's immortal hit, he or she does not need to search through the dark recesses of the Earth's center since the perfect Christmas is simply about enjoying a wonderful moment with your better half.

Christmas is two days away. I have absolutely no reason to think that Dec. 25, 2004 would be different from the Christmases of the past years. One can only pause and enjoy the sanctity of the moment.

Jose Ramon N. Quintos, 19, is a second year AB Management Economics student at the Ateneo de Manila University.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

If you are sending your contributions by e-mail, please address it to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address and information about your age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with.

Let's save, use our forests

WWF-Philippines decries the senseless loss of lives caused by the recent landslides and the shameless exploitation of our natural resources.

The knee-jerk call for a total log ban—coming from a government that has chosen to exclude environment from its 10-point agenda—may look like a great idea. But will it solve the problem? Especially since both the executive and judicial branches of government have shown themselves to be unwilling to do their share in the enforcement of existing forestry laws.

The total log ban proposal only proves how easily we can complicate and mask the problem by dodging the simple solution: a forestry program through community-based forest management (CBFM).

Like it or not, we need wood—especially our indigenous peoples and many of our forest communities—for household use and for income-generation. To these people, our forest resources serve as their only economic lifeboat. This is their right. These small groups can do little to cause harm to the forests. With national government failing in its duty to protect our remaining forests, these small groups may actually be our only hope in protecting them.

In 1996, at the instance of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, President Ramos declared CBFM as the national strategy for forest management to promote the socio-economic upliftment of forest communities through sustainable forest extraction. Equip the community with sound ecological and economic guidelines so they can learn how to responsibly use, benefit and protect something inherently theirs.

WWF believes that the recent catastrophe will serve as a catalyst for the DENR to start taking its creation, the CBFM, more seriously.

CBFM prevents large-scale illegal logging done in the guise of legitimacy. It helps the community regard its natural resources as a life support system that should be preserved through generations. Rather than waiting for decades for forests to spring back to life on their own, years should be dedicated in training forest communities to effectively manage their forests. In the last 100 years, we have logged more than 95 percent of our old-growth forests. Enough is enough.

A successful forest management program takes time, but the one thing we don't have to wait for is the opportunity for some major changes. There are solutions available today. The quickest solution is not a total log ban. Yes, commercial logging must be stopped. But, the national and local governments must show that they mean business: they simply have to enforce the law. After all, we are in the age of environmental justice. And what else could be more just than giving back the responsibility of forest management to the hands of forest-based communities? This is something we decided to do almost a decade ago. What are we waiting for?

—LOUELLA BELTRAN,
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Tanong ng Bayan
INQ TV
ABC
Tuwing Huwebes, 10:00pm

I-text ang inyong "fearless view" sa 2910. Pipiliin namin ang pinakamagaling na sagot. Ang premyo linggo-linggo: Isang 21" color TV set!

I-type: INQTV <ang inyong sagot>, <buong pangalan>, <siyudad o probinsiya>, tapos ipadala sa 2910. Cut-off time: WEDNESDAY, 6 PM. Winner will be identified during the InqTV program: Thursday, 10pm, on ABC.

Pasko sa taghirap, dapat pa bang magpasarap?

Narito ang ilan sa inyong mga sagot. Abangan ang winning entry ngayong alas-10 ng gabi, sa InqTV on ABC!

"dum vivimus vivamus! let us live while we live. ang pasko ay hindi krisis, at sa panahon nito, bawal ang nakasimangot."
Katrina Robles, Kamuning, QC

"gastos lang ang pasko.ngayong pnahon ng taghirap,lalo na sa ating tlagang mahirap, sa araw ng pasko mtulog na lng tyo!"
Helengrace C. Garcia, Quezon City

Harmful to Philippine economy

THIS letter is in response to the news item: "UP economists ask Church to soften population stand." (PDI, 12/1/04) The paper, titled "Population and poverty: the real score," which was cited in the report, illustrates a complete lack of logic on the part of the 17 economists from the University of the Philippines who authored it. Firstly, it shows a lack of understanding of Catholic teachings. Secondly, the data that the researchers collected to "prove" that large family sizes cause poverty was interpreted with unscientific bias. The economists failed to consider that large family sizes could result from poverty, and not the other way around.

In a country whose economy is centered on manual labor, it only makes sense that parents would view a large family, with its resultant helping hands, as a ticket out of poverty. The paper further states that "rapid population growth and high fertility rates" increase poverty. However, statistics from the Population Division of the Department of UN Economic and Social Affairs show that the fertility rate of the Philippines has been steadily dropping to replacement level, even without the widespread use of artificial contraception methods.

Pushing for nationwide population control could actually be detrimental to the Philippine economy. It could cause the total fertility rate to drop below replacement level. A decrease in population means a decrease in the nation's market size, and a smaller market could mean a decrease in the economy. Also, unlike in countries that offer a reliable national pension fund, Philippine parents with no or few children will have no means to support themselves in their old age; as a result, many could die from starvation and lack of medical care.

These patterns are already becoming evident. It is interesting that the economics professors of UP have failed to grasp concepts that are evident even to high school students.

—PATRICIA ARGIA REYNOSO LAWS,
105 Mango Drive,
Ayala Alabang,
Muntinlupa City

Dual citizenship: its merits

SHORT of saying *"alis diyan,"* Conrado de Quiros perorated and flayed dual citizens, particularly his pet peeves—the Filipino Americans—in his column "Still, sense of country." (PDI, 11/10/04)

As a relocatee to Manila out of the San Francisco-Bay Area, California, may I say in response:

1. Relocatees have not been given special treatment or accommodations. And we abide by the home court rules.

2. The Philippines has gone begging for foreign investments. What's so onerous about dual citizens investing in the country closest to their hearts? Chances are profits will stay here and wealth will spread out readily even among long lost relatives and hangers-on.

3. Dual citizens lead ordinary lives; they pay the same taxes and government fees slapped on all mortals of this republic. My electric/water bills are taxed. So are my bank accounts.

True, we don't pay individual income taxes, otherwise we'd end up being taxed twice for the same income because our earnings are already taxed by the country where we earn them. If De Quiros insists on subjecting overseas Filipino workers to "double taxation," he could go the way of Joan of Arc—burned at the stake. Dictator Ferdinand Marcos tried to tax immigrants but he hit a blank wall.

4. Loyalty and war draft? These are non-issues. The majority of dual citizens are war veterans and retirees who prefer to be laid to rest in the place they were born. Would the Philippines declare war on America or countries which have Filipinos as dual citizens? In what time frame? This is all a figment of imagination on overdrive.

"Duals" are solid citizens and are financially stable, a good source of foreign currency that gets injected into the main money stream. They are economic boosters who invigorate consumer spending, help expand the real estate market (more tax collections), create more jobs and increase productivity.

Duals have experience and distinct skills that they could impart to the community. They are not used to flouting laws, they are conscious of recycling, they do not pee on walls or spit on sidewalks and throw trash with nonchalance.

Even in death, duals contribute to the economy by covering funeral expenses—buying the flowers and paying the church stipend and fees for the rituals, memorial or cemetery plots. Duals validate President Clinton's quip: "It's the economy stupid!"

Duals are half-baked Filipinos: neither can they vote due to residency requirements nor can they run for office. Meantime, Mexican-Americans cross borders to vote. Angelina Jolie, star of the movie "Alexander," has just been offered dual citizenship by Cambodia due to her roots. Over 30 countries have dual citizens. Could they be wrong and De Quiros right by his lonesome self about dual citizenship?

—BEN S. SIMPAO,
bsimpao777@yahoo.com

How to implement environment laws

DINGALAN'S parish priest, Fr. Antonio Evangelio, identified logging as the cause of the recent floods and landslides. According to Environment Secretary Mike Defensor, illegal logging was the cause of the flash floods. A municipal mayor blamed the charcoal-makers and *kaingeros* (slash-and-burn farmers) for the disaster. (PDI, 12/1/04)

Of course, another cause is laxity in implementing existing laws. We have Republic Act 3092, the anti-illegal logging law and Presidential Decree 705, the forest reform law.

Letter-writer Paul R. Mortel once observed that we have a substantial number of laws that are unimplemented for lack of money. Because of this, he appealed to the members of the 13th Congress to take a leave of absence, adding that the savings to be derived from this move can be used in implementing laws. (PDI, 10/26/04)

Mortel is right. The suspension of the operations of the 13th Congress will free the allotted budget for the lawmakers and their staff for the implementation of environmental laws. As early as 1999, Eligio Soliman, Pangasinan environment officer, has been saying that the province has only 37 forest guards protecting 130,423 hectares of forest. For lack of funds we cannot hire the needed number of forest guards.

—ELIGIO M. PASTORIN,
92 Paraiso St.,
Parang, Marikina City

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In Pagsanjan, Laguna where Emilio Ramon Ejercito III is the municipal mayor, a big TV screen was playing a popular movie of Poe at the town open plaza for everyone to view.

Fausta Acaylar, 76, of Pangil, Laguna, said Poe was her favorite movie actor. She witnessed the whole process of the funeral on TV overnight with daughter Esperanza Espejo, 32, a mother of two.

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Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau

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Almario said a number of gambling lords, particularly from Pampanga, have already confirmed their attendance in the committee hearing, which could take place in January.

"We have already consulted top officials of the Philippine National Police and the Department of Interior and Local Government on the matter. By early January next year, operators of illegal numbers game will come to the House to attend the deliberation on the matter," he said.

Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes has earlier asked legislators to work for the legalization of illegal numbers games, saying this would help the cash-strapped national government raise revenue through collection of bets and prize taxes.

Other government officials supportive of the idea said legalizing the numbers game would also curb corruption among police and civilian officials and that financiers and operators would be forced to pay income taxes.

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Jueteng is popular in Luzon while *masiao* is the favorite among bettors in the Visayas. Mindanao is more inclined to last two, where the winning numbers are taken from the lotto results.

"We need to get their side on the proposal to legalize their trade," Almario said about the invitation extended to gambling lords.

Almario said aside from consulting with gambling lords, his committee will also talk with the clergy, nongovernment organizations and the academic sector.

Ferdinand Zuasola, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Fernando Poe, Jr. (FPJ)

SINGSON shows the room he reserves exclusively for the late actor Fernando Poe Jr. LEONCIO BALBIN/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

Chavit says he values friendship with FPJ

By Leoncio Balbin Jr.
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

VIGAN CITY—Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson said he treasured the 40-year friendship that he had forged with the late actor Fernando Poe Jr.

"*Totoo siyang kaibigan at pinangangalagaan ko yon* (He is a true friend and I treasure that friendship)," Singson said.

But the governor said he refuses to attend Poe's burial.

Asked why, he said, "*Nandun si* Erap (Erap will be there)," referring to Poe's best friend, former President Joseph Estrada.

Singson and Estrada were erstwhile friends and drinking buddies. Their friendship was broken when Singson, in 2000, exposed Estrada's alleged acceptance of *jueteng* money and kickbacks from tobacco excise taxes.

The exposé led to Estrada's ouster in January 2001.

Singson said he has kept a room exclusive for Poe's use in his Baluarte estate here.

The room is on the second floor of Singson's three-story house.

Singson visited Poe's wake at Sto. Domingo Church on Thursday and said he was warmly received by Poe's relatives and supporters.

Singson said despite his support for Poe's rival, President Macapagal-Arroyo in the May 10 elections, he and Poe never engaged in a fight and remained friends until the actor's death.

Cops charge rebel leader with murder of lawyer

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—Police have filed a criminal complaint against a squad leader of the breakaway Revolutionary Proletarian Army-Alex Boncayao Brigade (RPA-ABB) and two other unidentified suspects in the killing of Aklan lawyer Edgar Calizo Sr.

A murder complaint was filed on Monday against Rolly Sescar and two other unidentified persons at the Aklan Provincial Prosecutor's Office.

Supt. Odelardo Magayanes, acting Aklan police chief, said Sescar was identified by two witnesses as one of the two gunmen who repeatedly shot Calizo in front of his house on Catleya Street, Kalibo town on Nov. 20.

He said the witnesses identified Sescar from 10 photographs and video footage of RPA-ABB members and leaders.

One of the witnesses was Calizo's companion on the night he was killed.

When the two arrived at the lawyer's residence, the witness went out of the victim's Isuzu Crosswind to open the garage.

The suspects suddenly appeared and shot Calizo. The witness sought cover under a parked Mercedes Benz when gunfire rang out. The gunmen later sped off on a motorcycle driven by a third suspect.

17 bullet wounds

The lawyer died inside his bullet-riddled vehicle with at least 17 bullet wounds in the head and body. Investigators recovered more than 20 bullet shells.

Magayanes said Sescar leads an RPA-ABB unit operating in the northern Aklan towns of Nabas and Ibajay and in Pandan town in Antique but he said they had no proof that the RPA-ABB was behind the killing.

The police official said Sescar was supporting tenants involved in a land dispute case against a client of Calizo.

The victim's elder brother, Manuel "Warren" Calizo Jr., a former top official of the New People's Army (NPA) on Panay Island, was among those who broke away from the NPA in the early 1990s and formed the RPA-ABB.

But he later had a falling out with the breakaway group and has concentrated on running various businesses in the province.

Possibilities

Manuel earlier said it was possible that his former comrades murdered his brother because the group suspected that the Calizo brothers were behind the killing of RPA-ABB Western Visayas commander Daniel "Mokong" Batoy.

But the RPA-ABB denied that they were behind or even considered killing the lawyer.

"We have never pointed at any member of their family as being behind the killing of Ka Mokong," RPA-ABB national commander Stephen Paduano alias Carapali Lualhati earlier told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview.

AFP says NPA plan to attack Negros foiled

By Carla Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—Military officials yesterday said the plan of the New People's Army (NPA) to launch offensives in central Negros Occidental was foiled by the encounter in Isabela town that left a soldier and two rebels killed.

Lt. Col. Abraham Bagasin, 11th Infantry Battalion commanding officer, said soldiers recently received intelligence reports that the NPA was planning to attack either a police station or military detachment in Isabela and neighboring Binalbagan town.

He said the report was bolstered by the presence of about 50 rebels hiding at Hacienda Emma, Barangay Camang-Camang, Isabela, about 78 km south of this city.

These rebels, he added, were composed of the NPA Larangan Gerilya Yunit 1 and 2, headed by Danilo Bertulano, alias Ka Golem, and Romeo Nanta, alias Ka Juaning, who had been camping out in the sugarcane field for two days and were being fed by supporters.

Last Monday, 1Lt. Van Kristoffer Sumbeling and 2Lt. Chester Barela led two groups of 11th IB Charlie Company soldiers in conducting security patrols in Hacienda Emma, Barangay Camang-Camang that has been categorized as an "infiltrated area."

While approaching the area, Sumbeling said they were met by sniper fire. Pvt. Esmael Arcangeles of Roxas City in Capiz was hit in the head and was killed on the spot.

An exchange of gunfire ensued between them and the rebel snipers were reinforced by more rebels hiding in the sugarcane field, he added.

Six soldiers were wounded in the clash, which lasted for two hours.

The rebel side suffered two fatalities. They were Emman Solito of Isabela, and Miller Sabio of Guihulngan town in Negros Oriental.

Bagasin said that based on statements of the residents, about 20 rebels were either killed or wounded during the gunfight.

The soldiers recovered an M-60 light machine gun, two M-16 assault rifles, a homemade 12-gauge shotgun, assorted ammunition and medicines, an ICOM radio handset, communist documents and personal belongings, which were left behind in a sugarcane field by the fleeing rebels.

There are six Army units, including the 11th IB Charlie Company headquarters, operating in Isabela and Binalbagan. Both are near the scene of the encounter and are believed to be the targets of attacks by the NPA, military reports said.

After the encounter, Bagasin said he believed that Isabela was spared from the NPA's tactical operations.

Davao to enforce firecracker ban

DAVAO CITY—City officials warned residents here against violating the firecracker ban, which is now on its second year of implementation.

The firecracker ban was pushed by Mayor Rodrigo Duterte because he said the use of firecrackers was a stupid reason to lose one's finger.

When it was implemented, there has been no firecracker injury in the city.

City administrator Wendel Avisado Tuesday said they have strict orders from Duterte to implement the law banning the use of firecrackers and other pyrotechnics during Christmas and New Year.

Avisado said under the ordinance, even the use of the traditional bamboo cannon is also banned.

"The mayor wants a zero (injury) incident," Avisado said.

He said that first time offenders will be slapped with a fine of P1,000 or imprisonment of not more than one month or both at the discretion of the court. For a second offense, the violator will be fined P3,000 or imprisonment of not more than three months but not less than one month or both fine and imprisonment, at the discretion of the court.

For the third offense, a fine of P5,000 or imprisonment of not more than six months, or both fine and imprisonment at the discretion of the court, will be meted violators.

Avisado also warned businessmen against violating the firecracker ban saying they would not be spared either. *Anthony Allada, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

ERRATUM

The Maintenance Service Charge (MSC) in the new Maynilad Water Tariff effective Jan. 1, 2005 remains the same, instead of as published last Dec. 17 & 18, 2004 in the Notice To Maynilad Water Customers and the Public.

Maintenance Service Charge (MSC)	
Meter Size	Amount
	(Peso/connection)
1 1/4" or 40mm	4.00
2" or 50mm	6.00
3" or 75mm	10.00

The resolutions approved by the MWSS Board of Trustees did not cover any adjustment in the MSC.

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Jueteng is popular in Luzon while *masiao* is the favorite among bettors in the Visayas. Mindanao is more inclined to last two, where the winning numbers are taken from the lotto results.

"We need to get their side on the proposal to legalize their trade," Almario said about the invitation extended to gambling lords.

Almario said aside from consulting with gambling lords, his committee will also talk with the clergy, non-government organizations and the academic sector.

Ferdinand Zuasola, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Fernando Poe, Jr. (FPJ)

SINGSON shows the room he reserves exclusively for the late actor Fernando Poe Jr. LEONCIO BALBIN/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

Chavit says he values friendship with FPJ

By Leoncio Balbin Jr.
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

VIGAN CITY—Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson said he treasured the 40-year friendship that he had forged with the late actor Fernando Poe Jr.

"*Totoo siyang kaibigan at pinangangalagaan ko yon* (He is a true friend and I treasure that friendship)," Singson said.

But the governor said he refuses to attend Poe's burial.

Asked why, he said, "*Nandun si* Erap (Erap will be there)," referring to Poe's best friend, former President Joseph Estrada.

Singson and Estrada were erstwhile friends and drinking buddies. Their friendship was broken when Singson, in 2000, exposed Estrada's alleged acceptance of *jueteng* money and kickbacks from tobacco excise taxes.

The exposé led to Estrada's ouster in January 2001.

Singson said he has kept a room exclusive for Poe's use in his Baluarte estate here.

The room is on the second floor of Singson's three-story house.

Singson visited Poe's wake at Sto. Domingo Church on Thursday and said he was warmly received by Poe's relatives and supporters.

Singson said despite his support for Poe's rival, President Macapagal-Arroyo in the May 10 elections, he and Poe never engaged in a fight and remained friends until the actor's death.

Cops charge rebel leader with murder of lawyer

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—Police have filed a criminal complaint against a squad leader of the breakaway Revolutionary Proletarian Army-Alex Boncayao Brigade (RPA-ABB) and two other unidentified suspects in the killing of Aklan lawyer Edgar Calizo Sr.

A murder complaint was filed on Monday against Rolly Sescar and two other unidentified persons at the Aklan Provincial Prosecutor's Office.

Supt. Odelardo Magayanes, acting Aklan police chief, said Sescar was identified by two witnesses as one of the two gunmen who repeatedly shot Calizo in front of his house on Catleya Street, Kalibo town on Nov. 20.

He said the witnesses identified Sescar from 10 photographs and video footage of RPA-ABB members and leaders.

One of the witnesses was Calizo's companion on the night he was killed.

When the two arrived at the lawyer's residence, the witness went out of the victim's Isuzu Crosswind to open the garage.

The suspects suddenly appeared and shot Calizo. The witness sought cover under a parked Mercedes Benz when gunfire rang out. The gunmen later sped off in a motorcycle driven by a third suspect.

17 bullet wounds

The lawyer died inside his bullet-riddled vehicle with at least 17 bullet wounds in the head and body. Investigators recovered more than 20 bullet shells.

Magayanes said Sescar leads an RPA-ABB unit operating in the northern Aklan towns of Nabas and Ibajay and in Pandan town in Antique but he said they had no proof that the RPA-ABB was behind the killing.

The police official said Sescar was supporting tenants involved in a land dispute case against a client of Calizo.

The victim's elder brother, Manuel "Warren" Calizo Jr., a former top official of the New People's Army (NPA) on Panay Island, was among those who broke away from the NPA in the early 1990s and formed the RPA-ABB.

But he later had a falling out with the breakaway group and has concentrated on running various businesses in the province.

Possibilities

Manuel earlier said it was possible that his former comrades murdered his brother because the group suspected that the Calizo brothers were behind the killing of RPA-ABB Western Visayas commander Daniel "Mokong" Batoy.

But the RPA-ABB denied that they were behind or even considered killing the lawyer.

"We have never pointed at any member of their family as being behind the killing of Ka Mokong," RPA-ABB national commander Stephen Paduano alias Carapali Lualhati earlier told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview.

AFP says NPA plan to attack Negros foiled

By Carla Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—Military officials yesterday said the plan of the New People's Army (NPA) to launch offensives in central Negros Occidental was foiled by the encounter in Isabela town that left a soldier and two rebels killed.

Lt. Col. Abraham Bagasin, 11th Infantry Battalion commanding officer, said soldiers recently received intelligence reports that the NPA was planning to attack either a police station or military detachment in Isabela and neighboring Binalbagan town.

He said the report was bolstered by the presence of about 50 rebels hiding at Hacienda Emma, Barangay Camang-Camang, Isabela, about 78 km south of this city.

These rebels, he added, were composed of the NPA Larangan Gerilya Yunit 1 and 2, headed by Danilo Bertulano, alias Ka Golem, and Romeo Nanta, alias Ka Juaning, who had been camping out in the sugarcane field for two days and were being fed by supporters.

Last Monday, 1Lt. Van Kristoffer Sumbeling and 2Lt. Chester Barela led two groups of 11th IB Charlie Company soldiers in conducting security patrols in Hacienda Emma, Barangay Camang-Camang that has been categorized as an "infiltrated area."

While approaching the area, Sumbeling said they were met by sniper fire. Pvt. Esmael Arcangeles of Roxas City in Capiz was hit in the head and was killed on the spot.

An exchange of gunfire ensued between them and the rebel snipers were reinforced by more rebels hiding in the sugarcane field, he added.

Six soldiers were wounded in the clash, which lasted for two hours.

The rebel side suffered two fatalities. They were Emman Solito of Isabela, and Miller Sabio of Guihulngan town in Negros Oriental.

Bagasin said that based on statements of the residents, about 20 rebels were either killed or wounded during the gunfight.

The soldiers recovered an M-60 light machine gun, two M-16 assault rifles, a homemade 12-gauge shotgun, assorted ammunition and medicines, an ICOM radio handset, communist documents and personal belongings, which were left behind in a sugarcane field by the fleeing rebels.

There are six Army units, including the 11th IB Charlie Company headquarters, operating in Isabela and Binalbagan. Both are near the scene of the encounter and are believed to be the targets of attacks by the NPA, military reports said.

After the encounter, Bagasin said he believed that Isabela was spared from the NPA's tactical operations.

Davao to enforce firecracker ban

DAVAO CITY—City officials warned residents here against violating the firecracker ban, which is now on its second year of implementation.

The firecracker ban was pushed by Mayor Rodrigo Duterte because he said the use of firecrackers was a stupid reason to lose one's finger.

When it was implemented, there has been no firecracker injury in the city.

City administrator Wendel Avisado Tuesday said they have strict orders from Duterte to implement the law banning the use of firecrackers and other pyrotechnics during Christmas and New Year.

Avisado said under the ordinance, even the use of the traditional bamboo cannon is also banned.

"The mayor wants a zero (injury) incident," Avisado said.

He said that first time offenders will be slapped with a fine of P1,000 or imprisonment of not more than one month or both at the discretion of the court. For a second offense, the violator will be fined P3,000 or imprisonment of not more than three months but not less than one month or both fine and imprisonment, at the discretion of the court.

For the third offense, a fine of P5,000 or imprisonment of not more than six months, or both fine and imprisonment at the discretion of the court, will be meted violators.

Avisado also warned businessmen against violating the firecracker ban saying they would not be spared either. *Anthony Allada, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

ERRATUM

The Maintenance Service Charge (MSC) in the new Maynilad Water Tariff effective Jan. 1, 2005 remains the same, instead of as published last Dec. 17 & 18, 2004 in the Notice To Maynilad Water Customers and the Public.

Maintenance Service Charge (MSC)	
Meter Size	Amount
	(Peso/connection)
1 1/4" or 40mm	4.00
2" or 50mm	6.00
3" or 75mm	10.00

The resolutions approved by the MWSS Board of Trustees did not cover any adjustment in the MSC.

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INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Floreño G. Solmirano

Yuletide sailing for marine ecology

By Juan Escandor Jr.
Lagonoy, Camarines Sur

ALARMED by the fast-deteriorating state of marine life in Lagonoy Gulf, government officials of Camarines Sur have launched a campaign to protect the second largest body of water in the country.

Dubbed "Pasko sa Dagat (Christmas at Sea)," the drive launched on Dec. 14 involved fisherfolk and sea vessel operators in various cultural activities that highlighted the importance of balance between the use and preservation of marine resources.

The Lagonoy Gulf, a rich fishing ground where blue marlin abounds, lies in the eastern portion of Camarines Sur. It stretches down south to Albay and northeast to the island-province of Catanduanes, covering an area of 3,071 square kilometers.

But the water body is choking with problems of unregulated cutting of mangrove trees, deteriorating reefs, seagrass and seaweeds, and pollution from industrial companies.

A Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources document reveals that only 251 hectares of the gulf, or 26 percent of its total mangrove area of 1,700 hectares, remain. Live coral cover in some areas has considerably decreased.

The seagrass beds are also said to have been disturbed or altered as a result of the construction of corals and mariculture facilities.

Josefina Delfin, BFAR assistant regional director, said the "large, deep and scientifically challenging" gulf was bordered by 15 towns in three provinces, covering 165 villages. Some 7,500 fishing families depend on it for livelihood, she said.

The BFAR, local government units and nongovernment organizations had taken initiatives since the early 1990s to install a coastal resource management (CRM) system that addressed the ecological and environmental problems of the Lagonoy Gulf, Delfin said.

The issues of sustainable use and ecological preservation are common among most fishing grounds all over the country, she said.

Important step

The "Pasko sa Dagat" campaign is one vital step in drawing coastal communities to participate directly in solving these issues to ease the long-term effects to the environment and the people's livelihood, Delfin explained.

Through it, a government entity can reinforce the goal of raising people's awareness on the need to participate in managing the coastal and marine resources, she said.

Six coastal towns, represented by some 4,000 fisherfolk and sea vessel operators, joined the kick-off program on Banong Island in Lagonoy.

Gov. Luis Raymund Villafuerte Jr. said the "special" Yuletide celebration sought to achieve a convergence of marine ecological campaigns of LGUs along the gulf.

"We wanted to recruit advocates of safe fishing technologies and practices among the fisherfolk themselves and encourage the LGUs to initiate the promotion of sound utilization of marine resources in a sustainable way," Villafuerte said.

The "Pasko sa Dagat" also drew the participation of the sea vessel operators so that they could act as guardians of clean marine environment in order to enhance tourism efforts in the area.

The campaign stems from Ordinance No. 20, which the provincial board approved in 2001.

COURTESY OF THE MULTIMEDIA EDUCATION CENTER

TWO JUVENILE whale sharks, beached last year along the shallow waters of the Lagonoy Gulf in Sabang Port, San Jose, Camarines Sur, are helped back to deeper waters by fisherfolk.

Biodiversity

Villafuerte said the ordinance upholds the conservation of biodiversity by prohibiting the gathering, taking or transporting of corals, giant clams or spawning fish, and the capture of dolphins, whales, sea turtles, manta rays, whale sharks and other marine plant and animal species identified in the Convention of International Trade of Endangered Species (Cites).

It prohibits construction of tourist facilities directly in the water's edge in certain areas that could result in the loss and alteration of breeding and nursery grounds of fish.

Dumping of garbage and waste from sea vessels is banned at any port and waters within the territorial jurisdiction of the province.

Villafuerte said the provincial government would undertake the marine ecology campaign every year. Delfin said the "Pasko sa Dagat" included two of the four CRM strategies that the BFAR had so far employs—community participation and government intervention. The other CRM strategies are NGO intervention and institution-building.

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Typhoons won't stop bishop's 'simbang gabi'

By Romulo O. Ponte
Infanta, Quezon

DESPITE the spate of typhoons that struck northern Quezon and Aurora late last month, the "simbang gabi" (dawn Masses) tradition lives on among victims who flock to churches deep in mud.

Bishop Rolando J. Tria Tirona of the Prelature of Infanta (Quezon) has been celebrating the Masses since Dec. 16 to sustain faith and hope in the hearts of his suffering constituents.

Tirona also wrote a poem of hope shortly before the Masses began in the Infanta Cathedral and scribbled "Merry Christmas" greetings to donors, benefactors and partners.

"We are strengthened that you are still with us as we continue to help rehabilitate and rebuild people's lives and families," he said in a letter. "For us in the Prelature of Infanta, which was hardest hit by the recent flash flood tragedy, Christmas must go on. It must be solemnly celebrated."

"As we carry the heavy load of pain and suffering at this time, we are consoled and strengthened by the generous hearts and hands ready to help us during our immediate and urgent needs. During those moments of urgency, YOU WERE THERE TO HELP US!" Tirona said.

He thanked the donors for their kindness and assistance. "We think of how the Holy Family experienced suffering and uncertainty as well. Like Mother Mary and St. Joseph, we hold on to our faith that God is with us."

The letter was also signed by former prelate and Bishop Emeritus Julio Xavier Labayen and Deacon Mario Van Loon of the Apostles of Contemporary Times (ACT), relief operations director.

ACT Sr. Rolanda V. Biragay, who coordinates relief operations for the flood victims in the prelature, said Tirona had traveled to the devastated areas in northern Quezon and Aurora, including the parishes on Polillio Island, during the novena Masses to lead the eucharistic celebration.

Churchgoers, young and old alike, attended the Masses, standing with bare feet on the muddy floor and singing songs of praises, Biragay said.

She said the bishop went by ordinary transport and sometimes on foot throughout the prelature and to as far as the Polillo archipelago, General Nakar and Real. He would go to Manila from Infanta to reach the towns of Aurora.

The prelature is composed of 18 parishes with four vicariates—the Divine Infant Jesus of Prague and Saint Mark in Infanta, St. Joseph in Polillo, San Luis Obispo in Baler, Aurora, and St. Anthony of Padua in Casiguran, Aurora.

Tirona's poem in Filipino, written at 3:30 a.m. of Dec. 16 in Infanta:

"Sa gitna ng katahimikan,
isip ko'y gumagala
Sa gitna ng katahimikan,
Hinagpis ng tao'y nadarama
Sa gitna ng katahimikan
Bulong ng simoy nagpapaalala:
Na may bagong umaga!
Simbang Gabi na sa Prelatura
Ng Infanta!
Halina, Hesus, Halina!"

Donations to the typhoon victims of northern Quezon and Aurora may be sent to the Mt. Carmel Shrine Parish, Broadway Street, New Manila, Quezon City, c/o Sis. Zenia Pinaga or Bro. Dodong Nazario.

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FPJ mementos, memories are made (and sold) of these

BUTTONS in memory of actor Fernando Poe Jr. enjoy brisk sales outside Sto. Domingo Church in Quezon City. AP

By Tarra V. Quismundo, Leila B. Salaverria and Tina G. Santos

MANY mourned his death by crying, lighting candles, chanting their idol's name, or waving banners and flaglets acknowledging him President.

But many, too, found an opportunity to do brisk business with the record crowd that turned out during the eight-day wake for Fernando Poe Jr. at the Sto. Domingo Church in Quezon City, and at his burial yesterday at the Manila North Cemetery.

Mementos of the late screen idol were for sale at the entrance of the cemetery as early as sunrise. Strategically positioning themselves not only at the cemetery's entry points but even in the narrow alleys within, the vendors sold FPJ T-shirts, vests, headbands, wrist bands, pins and socks.

"We thought of making shirts with his name on it because Zamboanga was solid for him," said Michael de Asis.

Long journey

Shortly after Poe died of a stroke a minute past midnight on Tuesday last week, De Asis' relative, who owned a shirt-printing company, decided to make FPJ shirts and wristbands in honor of the actor much beloved in the Muslim-dominated southern provinces. Poe had played the role of a Muslim in several films.

De Asis journeyed to Manila aboard a ship, bringing with him 800 pieces of FPJ shirts in red, orange, yellow, blue and white.

The shirts with different designs meant to profess love for the actor, carried the messages "I Love FPJ," "Ituloy ang Laban (Continue the fight)," "FPJ: The Man, The Legend" and "We will never forget FPJ." Others were printed with photos of Poe with his wife, actress Susan Roces. A light, white cotton T-shirt printed with FPJ's name cost P40, while a T-shirt with his name and silk-screen image sold from P100 to P150.

"It's cheaper now," said Jocelyn Ingalla, who said she came all the way from Macabebe, Pampanga for a last glimpse of her idol.

"My sister was able to buy a white T-shirt with the same design at the Sto. Domingo Church for P60," she added.

FPJ vests were priced at P500 each, headbands and pins were sold for P15 a piece, and socks at P10.

Since Poe's wake at Sto. Domingo, the shirts had been the best-sellers. "We sold shirts worth P30,000," said de Asis, also a Poe fan. "But even if we were not able sell them all, we could bring them back to Zamboanga."

Alfredo Ibañez also seized the chance to sell to a captive crowd. After joining the funeral march, Ibañez set off to display his merchandise—magazines showing Poe's photos and recounting his life story.

"At Sto. Domingo, many people bought the magazines, and I made P10,000 a day, three days in a row," he said.

Also sold at the cemetery were sling bags and arm socks printed with "I Love FPJ," competing with straw hats and fans, towels, a variety of food items, and even power tools!

On banners, messages were more direct. "President of the Philippines His Excellency Fernando Poe, Jr." read one banner. Another read: "Da King *paano na ang bayan* (What will happen to our country)?"

But not everything was for sale.

Sodas in cans, bottled water and packed food donated by the friends of the Poe family were distributed free to the media, marshals and volunteers assigned to do assorted jobs at the funeral site.

Copies of a 20-page colored comic book, titled "Bayan ang Bida/ Fernando Poe Jr.: 1939-2004" were also given away for free to those who joined the march to Poe's final resting place at the Manila North Cemetery.

Credits due

The book highlighted Poe's achievements as an actor, and showed his helpful and generous side, an extraordinarily ordinary man who wanted to help his country and was persuaded later on to run for president. The book ended with the message that in the hearts of the masses, Poe won the elections and would always be considered a hero.

The burial was generally peaceful and orderly.

Western Police District director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong was careful to share the credit for helping manage the huge crowds with the funeral's organizers.

No stampedes or big fights broke out among the supporters, and there were no confrontations between Poe's followers and police, he added.

The only unsavory reports received by police were stories of wallets, bags and cell phones lost to thieves.

Careful not to repeat incidents of violent dispersal that had resulted in numerous casualties, policemen supervising the march did not carry any firearm on them.

TREATMENT POOL ACCIDENT

Two boys drown in Rizal landfill

By Ruth L. Navarra

TWO BOYS drowned Tuesday in the water treatment pool of the shuttered San Mateo landfill.

The bodies of French Jun Agustin, 7, and Jade Cabarles, 6, were found floating in the pool at about 7 p.m.

Agustin and Cabarles managed to get into the compound because there were no fences to keep anyone out, especially at the treatment pool, said police investigator Manuel Padlan.

According to police, Cabarles asked permission from his father, Gilbert, to go out and play.

Cabarles and Agustin, who were friends and fellow first graders at the Sapinit (Antipolo City) Elementary School, then went to the landfill site.

Gilbert was unaware of where they were going.

When it started to get dark and his son had not yet come home, Gilbert began to look for them but failed.

A neighbor told Gilbert that he saw the children take off toward the landfill area.

The father quickly went to the dump and found his son's pair of slippers on the side of the pool.

Gilbert dove into the pool and found the two boys already dead, police said.

Police believe that the two boys were playing beside the pool, which was used to treat leacheate and wastewater from the landfill, when they slipped into the water.

Although most of the 73-hectare landfill is in San Mateo, Rizal, the water treatment pool is within the limits of Antipolo City, particularly in Sitio Sapinit, Barangay San Juan.

The government opened the landfill in San Mateo to accommodate the more than 6,000 tons of garbage produced daily in Metro Manila.

It was closed down in December 2000 after it had reportedly reached its capacity.

The death at the closed down facility is the second such incident in a dump.

On Dec. 9, a 9-year-old boy was also killed in a garbage slide at the garbage transfer facility at Pier 18 in Manila.

Makati emergency hospital to open

By Margaux C. Ortiz

IT MAY come too late for responding to possible fireworks-related injuries on New Year's Eve but the new Makati Acute Care Center (MACC) will surely be of great help to residents for the coming years when it begins operations on Jan. 1.

Mayor Jejomar Binay said the MACC, the first medical facility in the country dedicated solely to emergency care, would provide timely and adequate emergency care to residents and the general public.

"We have built this facility in line with our conviction that quality emergency care is a fundamental right of every person, and should be made available to all who seek it," Binay said in a statement.

The facility is located at the old site of the Ospital ng Makati on Malugay Street, Barangay Bel-Air, Makati City.

According to MACC administrator Dr. Perry Peralta, the center is fully equipped with the appropriate in-house diagnostic, administrative and clinical support services for the proper treatment of severely ill and injured patients.

"The MACC will be staffed round-the-clock by a full complement of qualified doctors, nurses and support personnel trained in responding to acute illness and injury via the team approach," Peralta said.

The administrator, however, stressed that the facility will not handle "outpatient" cases.

FPJ's burial and other stuff

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

FPJ WAS laid to rest yesterday amidst pomp and splendor befitting a movie star of his stature. He was king to his millions of fans, and they called him "Da King."

Poor people jostled, elbowed, shoved and pushed one another for a chance to bury the man they admired on and off screen. Since movies tend to portray actors bigger than life, fans think that what their idol on screen was also his character when he's not in front of the camera.

FPJ symbolized the poor people's hope of a better life.

***

The promise of a better life is something to look forward to day after day after day. If the better life doesn't come today, then it will come tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow.

An elusive dream doesn't end because it's something to chase after for the rest of one's life.

That's why actors and actresses who portray the roles of poor people succeeding or getting rich in the end become popular with the masses.

Hope springs eternal, as the saying goes.

***

The poor identify with FPJ—as well as his bosom friend former President Erap—because they portrayed roles their fans thought were their real personas.

To the unthinking fans, reality and fantasy merge; there's no difference between them.

That's why in this country and even in the United States it's very easy for a movie star to become a politician. Look at former President Erap. Look at Arnold Schwarzenegger, governor of California.

***

I heard ABS-CBN management is thinking of getting back Korina Sanchez to anchor for TV Patrol vice Karen Davila who replaced her.

Karen cried and made a scene after actress Susan Roces blamed her network for a "biased" coverage of FPJ on the campaign trail during the last presidential election. She even apologized to Ms Roces for the "sin" of her network.

The last thing a broadcast journalist should do is to become emotional during an interview. A news anchor should neither sympathize nor become adversarial toward an interviewee.

Sanchez would have parried Susan Roces' thrusts at ABS-CBN the way an expert anchor should.

For now, Korina Sanchez is irreplaceable as an anchor.

***

After Tuesday's column, headlined "An uncaring home for the aged," several student caregivers from the St. Augustine School for Caregivers gave me a call.

They gave truth to my claim that some people might be using the Tahanan ni Maria, a home for the aged and street children, for their own selfish ends. Tahanan is located in Carmona, Cavite.

Some of the callers were at the "Tahanan" when I went with members of Streetpals to distribute food, medicine and Christmas gifts to its wards. Streetpals is composed of Philippine Airlines flight attendants and stewards who serve the underprivileged when they're not serving PAL passengers in flight.

We noticed that the people who run Tahanan were uncaring about their wards. One old woman was in extreme pain when we were giving a Christmas party for the old folks and kids, but she was left alone by the Tahanan employees. Only the student caregivers were trying to ease her pain.

It took Streetpals to bring the old woman, Panfila Boraqueza, to the Makati Medical Center.

My callers from St. Augustine said that donations for the old folks' home ended up in a store owned by a Catholic priest who had been kicked out for disobedience.

You'll hear more about Tahanan and that priest in subsequent columns.

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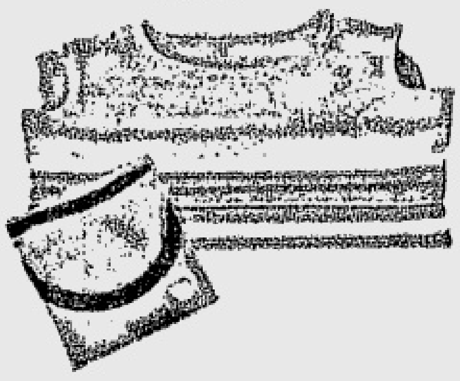

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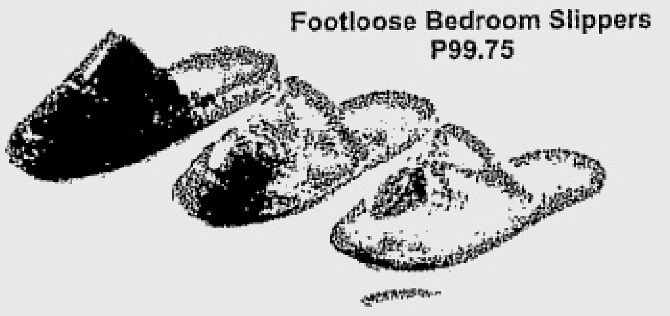

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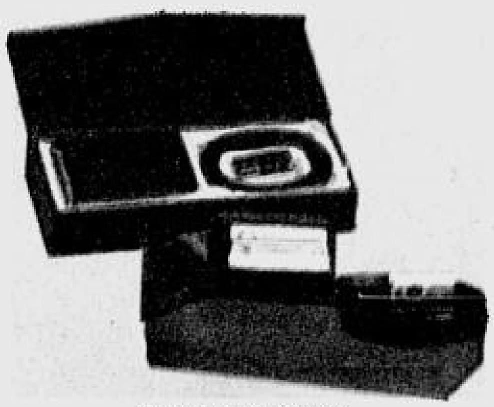

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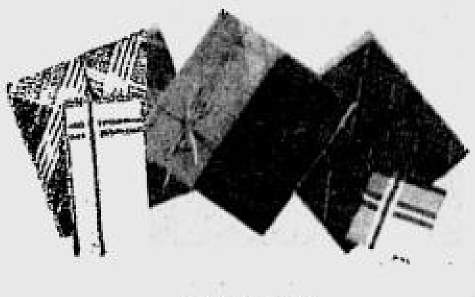

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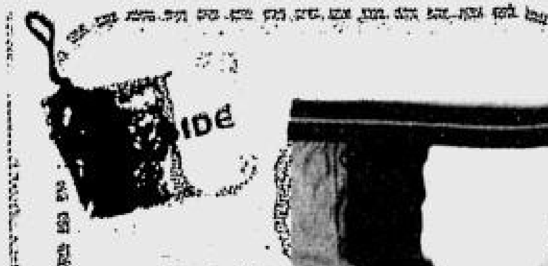

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SPORTS TV

BASKETBALL: NBA - Hornets vs Lakers; 11:30 a.m. (r-9 p.m.); Solar Sports - New Orleans hopes to put the sting against LA.

US NCAA - Missouri vs Illinois; 12:30 a.m.; ESPN - The number one-ranked Fighting Illini host the Tigers.

AMERICAN FOOTBALL: 2004 GMAC Bowl; 9 a.m.; ESPN - The college bowl season continues as Bowling Green faces Memphis in Alabama.

Compiled by L. Mangulat

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2004
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Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres
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Fired-up Realtors clobber Barako

Patrimonio No. 16 jersey retired

By June Navarro

KENNETH Duremdes recovered from a listless start to lift Sta. Lucia Realty to a 105-84 thrashing of Red Bull Barako in the Gran Matador PBA Philippine Cup last night at the Philsports Arena.

Duremdes shot 22 of his 27 points in the second half, including four triples, after going two of nine from the field in the first two quarters.

But it was actually Marlou Aquino and Dennis Espino who made life easier for the 1998 MVP as Sta. Lucia's twin towers forced the Barako defense to collapse on them, giving Duremdes open looks at the basket in the final half.

Espino also had a couple of three-point plays when the Realtors were beginning to pull away before the 6-foot-9 Aquino took over and toyed with Omanzie Rodriguez and Ryan Bernardo.

Ogie Gumatay and Rafael Santos also joined hands with Duremdes as Sta. Lucia notched its sixth victory in 17 games.

"We have a Christmas party after the game. I told them that if we lose and go there with a heavy heart, we won't enjoy the night and that probably fired them up," said Sta. Lucia coach Alfrancis Chua.

The Barako, who were in total control in the first half, lost for the 11th time and will finish their 18-game elimination schedule against San Miguel Beer on Christmas Day. The loss was also the fourth straight for Red Bull.

In case of a tie, the Realtors now have a much better quotient over the Barako, who beat them in triple overtime, 124-118, in Bacolod City almost two months ago. Both teams are trying to avoid the ninth and 10th seed, which will have to beat their wild card opponents twice to advance to the next round.

"We don't want to be at a disadvantage so we have to sweep our remaining games," said Chua, whose Realtors face the Alaska Aces on Jan. 5 to end their elimination-round stint.

In the second game, Purefoods nipped FedEx, 112-110, to climb to the No. 4 spot and stay in contention for a twice-to-beat edge.

Dropping to a 6-12 record, FedEx fell to No. 10 and may have to beat its wild card opponent twice to advance.

Meanwhile, a couple of famous hoop personalities graced the league's toasting of Purefoods skipper Alvin Patrimonio.

Former Purefoods coach Baby Dalupan and former league commissioner Rudy Salud graced the ceremonies, where Patrimonio's No. 16 jersey was also retired.

Dalupan was among Patrimonio's early coaches in the professional league while Salud was the commissioner when the four-time Most Valuable Player first made his mark in the league in 1988.

The Scores:

First Game

STA. LUCIA 105—Duremdes 27, Espino 21, Aquino 17, Santos 15, Gumatay 11, Adriano 4, Cuan 3, Gonzales 3, Omolon 2, Locsin 2, Francisco 0.

RED BULL 84—Tugade 17, Villanueva 13, Baguio 12, Asaytono 10, Alvarez 9, Valenzuela 6, Lopez 5, Rodriguez 4, Bernardo 3, Torion 3, Robinson 2, Agapito 0.

Quarters: 20-18, 42-44, 71-61, 105-84.

Second Game

PUREFOODS 112—Simon 23, Raymundo 21, Yee 15, Yap 13, Evangelista 13, Laure 10, Castillo 8, Artadi 4, Espinosa 3, Limpot 2.

FEDEX 110—Ritualo 32, Arboleda 16, Ferriols 11, De Ocampo 10, Pingris 10, Billones 10, Codiñera 8, Yap 7, Ejercito 3, Sison 3, Gonzales 0, Se 0.

Quarters: 26-24, 60-45, 86-79, 112-110.

GAMES SATURDAY
(Cuneta Astrodome)
2 p.m.—San Miguel Beer vs Red Bull Barako
4:30 p.m.—TNT vs Bgy. Ginebra

STA. Lucia's Kenneth Duremdes chases the ball ahead of Red Bull's Junthy Valenzuela. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

P15.5-M DEAL

I now have a permanent home, says Villanueva

By Dennis U. Eroa

A BARAKO forever?

Not yet, but Red Bull made sure that young slotman Enrico Villanueva will continue to patrol the Barako lane with the intensity of a drill sergeant until 2009 after signing him up to a three-year-and-a-half contract extension recently.

"I'm very happy because I now have a permanent home," Villanueva told the INQUIRER.

"All the hard work is paying off for Enrico," Arben Santos, Villanueva's trusted adviser, said yesterday. "He's got a long way to go, but he's on the right track with his winning outlook."

Surprised to find that the 6-foot-5 former Ateneo bruiser was still available in the seventh round of the 2003 PBA draft, Red Bull coach Yeng Guiao wasted no time snaring Villanueva, thus shoring up the Barako frontline.

"At the start, Rico's feeling quite low with the results. I told him to work hard and prove his worth. I think he accepted and passed the challenge," Santos recalled.

Villanueva blossomed into Red Bull's main man following the departure of "Fil-shams" Davonn Harp and Mick Pennisi.

This conference, Villanueva is averaging 19 points, 9 rebounds, 2 assists and 1 block shot per game, making him a favorite for the PBA Most Improved Player of the award this season.

After being drafted by Red Bull, Villanueva inked a contract lasting up to Dec. 31, 2005. His new pact will give Villanueva the maximum salary of P350,000 from Jan. 1. 2006 to July 2009 or a total of P15.5 million, excluding bonuses.

VILLANUEVA: Three-year maximum contract from Red Bull Barako

Ramirez: PSC caretaker

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE PHILIPPINE Sports Commission is now in the hands of a caretaker–PSC commissioner Butch Ramirez.

The most senior commissioner of the PSC board, Ramirez, according to reliable sources, was appointed officer-in-charge of the agency for three to six months after meeting with President Macapagal-Arroyo in Malacañang yesterday.

The short term of office is a trial of sorts for the sports official from Davao, who has been in the commission since the term of Butch Tuason five years ago.

The President's main challenge for Ramirez, according to sources, is to "weed out the source of corruption" in the P500 million-a-year agency, which has been a perennial issue in the PSC.

Ramirez didn't issue any statement but sources close to him said he has "already accepted the challenge" given by the President, who is expected to issue a formal announcement anytime this week.

The development ended the two-week-long guessing game as to the replacement of outgoing chair Eric Buhain, who has been transferred to the Games and Amusements Board.

But the other contenders should not be counted out since the President usually appoints an OIC after the chair is removed.

Former PSC commissioners Dominador Cepeda and now Bacolod Rep. Monico Puentevella had also briefly served as OIC before a PSC chair was officially appointed.

But as caretaker, Ramirez has gained the inside track in the now three-cornered race for Buhain's position.

The PSC contenders are Ateneo athletic director and 1991 Southeast Asian Games organizing committee secretary general Junjun Capistrano and Manila Sports Council chair and former Asian taekwondo champ Ali Atienza.

Ramirez has earlier been appointed deputy secretary general of the Philippine SEA Games Organizing Committee, which is in the thick of preparations for the 2005 Games to be held in the country in November.

RAMIREZ

Nat'l football tilt kicks off Dec. 26

PHILIPPINE football fans will be treated to a year-ending national tournament from Dec. 26-30 at the University of the Philippines Diliman and the Ultra stadium, with eight top-flight local clubs competing for top prizes.

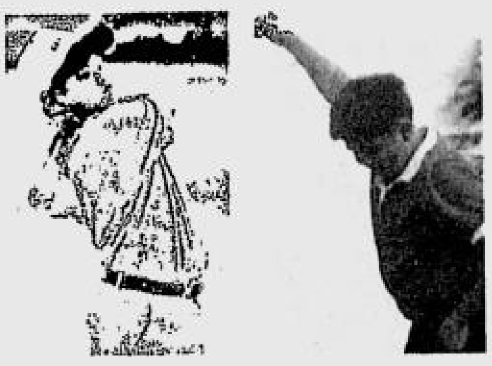
This was announced over the weekend by Joey Sumiller, national project director of the tournament sponsor, Play Soccer Make Peace Philippines, and Juan Miguel Romualdez, president of the Philippine Football Federation.

The eight participating teams are: Group A: Philippine Army Football Club, Mendiola Football Club, Taft Football Club, and the Blue Guard Football Club.

Group B: Philippine Navy Football Club, Philippine Air Force Football Club, FEU Football Club, and Diliman Football Club.

The eight teams feature in their rosters top Filipino football players, many of whom have seen action in the recent Tiger Cup competition staged in Malaysia by the Asian Football Federation. They will compete for the coveted Philippine Cup and various cash prizes consisting of: first prize, P100,000; second prize, P80,000; third prize, P60,000; fourth prize; P40,000.

Group round-robin eliminations will be staged in UP from Dec. 26-28.



WHAT'S INSIDE

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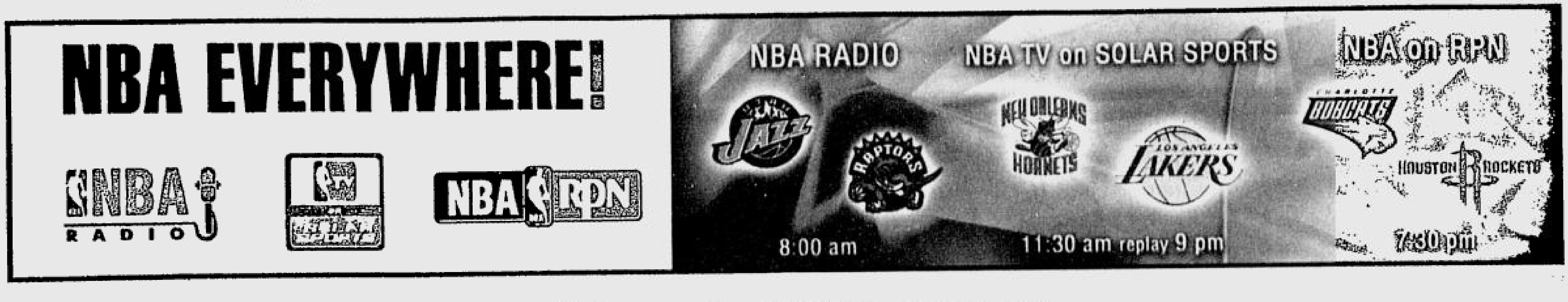
- ▨ Cavs turn back T'Wolves /A21



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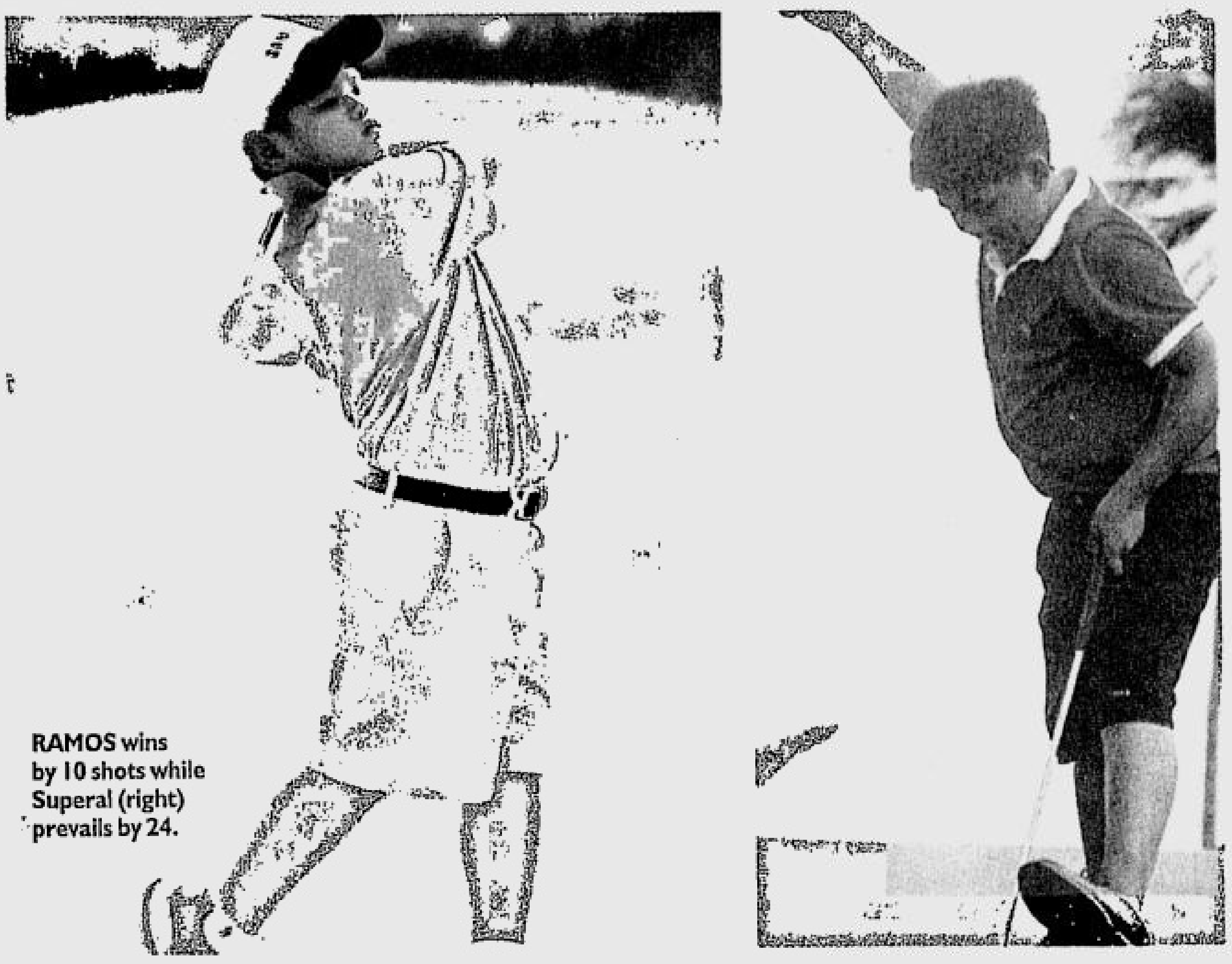
SUPERAL, RAMOS STAND OUT

Blowout wins mark Young Guns



RAMOS wins by 10 shots while Superal (right) prevails by 24.

JP De Claro came out on top of the only age-group that went down the wire yesterday, nipping Lloyd Go for the 9-under crown of the Young Guns International Jungolf championships at the Manila Southwoods.

JP De Claro came out on top of the only age-group that went down the wire yesterday, nipping Lloyd Go for the 9-under crown of the Young Guns International Jungolf championships at the Manila Southwoods.

De Claro assembled a 73 for a 36-hole 145 total, winning by two shots over Go, who shot a 74 at the Legends course.

The tournament toasted a set of players who ruled their respective divisions in runaway fashion, led by Wolen Superal in the boy's 12-under.

Superal scored a second round 77 for 153, winning by 24 shots over Juan Miguel Arevalo, who struggled with an 88 for a 177.

AR Ramos, the Little People's champion in the United States, broke away from a first round tie with Mark Anthony Arevalo by shooting a six-under 30 to win the 8-under division.

Arevalo, who teed off tied with Ramos for the lead after the first day with a 37, ballooned to a 40 and settled for second.

Marcel Puyat (11 years), Miguel Tabuena (10 years) and Justin Dy (7 and under) were the other boys division winners of the event sponsored by the International Container Terminal Services Inc. (ICTSI), Smart Kids, Gatorade, Absolute Mineral Water, Golf Depot through Joey Mendoza, Egay San Luis, Provil, Share Exchange and Manila Southwoods. Bellevue in Alabang is the official hotel.

Making up the girls division champions were Regina de Guzman (12 years), Ma-an Legaspi (11 years), Kristina Potenciano (10 years), Andie Unson (9 years) and Jamie Yu (8-under). All of them posted double-digit victories.

LPGA champion Jennifer Rosales awarded the trophies to the winners together with organizing committee head Luigi Tabuena.

The results:

12 years: Boys 153—Wolen Superal 76-77, 177 Juan Miguel Arevalo 89-88, Franz Joseph Olea 86-91; Girls 157—Regina de Guzman 80-77, 189 Angelika Dalingaling 98-91, 228 Mara Monsalve 123-105

11 years: Boys 151—Marcel Puyat 76-75, 157 Jan Ibanez 75-82, 167 Chanpat (Thai) 85-82; Girls 153—Ma-an Legaspi 74-79, 166 Katya dela Cruz 84-82, 181 Stephanie Olea 88-93

10 years: Boys 144—Miguel Tabuena 73-71, 149 Remo Fueg 73-76, 157 Bino dela Paz 78-79; Girls 154—Kristina Potenciano 75-79, 167 Angela de Villa 84-83, 171 Irina Gabasa 88-83

9 years: Boys 145—JP de Claro 72-73, 147 Lloyd Go 73-74, 156 Jack Ekegren 75-81; Girls—156 Andie Unson 80-76, 174 Marvie Monsalve 85-89, 192 July Vasandani 93-99

8 years: Boys 67—AR Ramos 37-30, 77 Mark Arevalo 37-40, Miggy Yee 38-39; Girls 73—Jamie Yu 33-40, 83 Princess Superal 40-43, 88 Felicia Medalla 45-43

7 years: 86 Justin Dy 43-43, 101 Joseph Kano 53-48, 106 Andrew Alafriez 50-56

Manotoc fires 73 for jr X-mas title

Musong R. Castillo

JUNIOR Putra Cup veteran Matthew Manotoc shot a one-over 73 on Monday to rule the premier Class A division for boys of the Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines Christmas tournament in Canlubang.

The 16-year-old carried his bag the whole round to prepare for the Asian region qualifying for the world championship, nipping IG Gutierrez by two shots after nines of 37-36 at the tough North course.

Manotoc, a junior at the International School who finished in the top 10 in Indonesia last August, sees action in the Malacca qualifying in March where everyone will be required to play without a caddy.

Mico Yee, who played for the Southwoods Am team in the recent Fil-Am Invitational in Baguio, finished third with a 76.

Bambee dela Paz ruled girl's Class A with a 79, five ahead of Matet Salivio even as Jikjik Abdon (76) and Crystal Superal (77) triumphed in boy's and girl's Class B, respectively.

Dottie Ardina shot an 80 and stamped her superiority in girl's Class C, while Wolen Superal shot a 71 and emerged as the boy's champion with an 18-shot victory over Jobim Carlos.

Yulo memorial golf slated Jan. 29-30

THE 27TH Jose Yulo Memorial golf tournament will be held Jan. 29-30 with a banner field expected to vie for top honors in various divisions at the north and south courses of the Canlubang golf complex in Laguna.

Fabulous prizes are up for grabs in the individual and team events of the member-guest team tournament held in honor of the late Speaker. Aside from the net and gross honors, prizes will also be given to the top three scorers on each course for two days of play.

Registration is ongoing with deadline set on Jan. 27. For details, call up Fely Anillo at (049)549-1363 (tel/fax), Darly Patalot and Naty Esteban at (049)549-7201, (049)549-0147 to 48 or at the Makati Office c/o Maite Tangco at 897-6887 or 890-9321.

Guessing game

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

PEOPLE keep asking: Who will replace chair Eric Buhain in the Philippine Sports Commission?

I wish I knew.

Eric himself has said he does not know who will replace him. But he knows he is going to start work as chair of the Games and Amusements Board beginning January 1.

Incumbent PSC Commissioner Butch Ramirez and Ateneo athletic director Jun Jun Capistrano had been both prominently mentioned as frontrunners.

But lately, Ali Atienza, the son of Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, has entered the picture as a dark horse.

I was told that Ramirez's main weapon is his sincere, dedicated and blot-free performance as a PSC commissioner the last three years. His style of leadership has been marked by transparency. "His name is as clean as a bed sheet," said one PSC old-timer.

Does that mean the others, if not the rest, have dirt in their hands?

Capistrano, if named to the post, will bring with him a professional integrity he had built through the years while at Ateneo, the learning institution known for its world-class quality of ethics, discipline and an unsullied reputation for everything upright.

Atienza's youth and vigor are his chief assets. A taekwondo gold medalist in the Asian region, Atienza, not yet 35, might yet fire the imagination of sports-lovers and supporters as his idealism could be the spark needed to ignite a renaissance in Philippine sports. I'm sure Obet Pagdanganan, chair of the RP Organizing Committee for the 2005 SEA Games, which we are hosting in November, will welcome Ali's appointment with pride.

The name of Peping Cojuangco, the incoming president of the Philippine Olympic Committee, has also cropped up. Likewise, the name of Cito Dayrit, the outgoing POC president, who was once a PSC commissioner.

"But I tell you, Al, I had been offered that position before already and I politely declined it," said Cito when I bumped into him at Merk's at Greenbelt 3 on Monday evening. "Let's just wait and see what's going to happen. These are interesting times, right?"

And so, as they love to say, Abangan!

***

Death visited the celebrity world in wild abandon the past few weeks.

Composer George Canseco and theater great Zeneida Amador joined our creator last month. This December, my golfmate Jimmy Navarro, the father of dearest Lea, died just hours ahead of Da King of Philippines movies, FPJ—Jimmy of a lingering illness like George and Zeneida, and FPJ of massive stroke. Next, we hear of the tragic death of KC, the 16-year-old daughter of Speaker Joe de Venecia, in a fire that gutted the second floor of the Speaker's house in Dasmariñas Village, Makati. Just a couple of days back, the grandson of comedy king Dolphy, was killed by a gun shot.

May God have mercy on their souls.

Yesterday, Rudy Samson, a pillar in Philippine golf, succumbed to a lingering illness. I condole with his family and other loved ones. Rudy's remains lie at the San Antonio church in Forbes Park, Makati. Rudy, who was the captain of the Philippine Team to the World Amateur Team Golf Championship in New Zealand in 1990, was a gentleman of the first degree. That observation was reinforced when I was with him in the World Amateurs in Vancouver, Canada, in 1992. For years, Rudy captained the Luisita team to numerous championship titles in the seniors division of the PAL Golf Interclub. You will be missed, Rudy.

***

FASTBREAK. I welcome the arrival today of Della Mosher and Maya Torres, who flew in from Phoenix, Arizona, via Los Angeles on board a luxurious PAL jet. They will link up with Nonong and Astrid Fernandez, the lovebirds from Glan, Austria, at the SSS residence of Dante and Ching Fernandez in Marikina City before proceeding to Roxas City for a Christmas reunion with the matriarch, Tia Rosie Tutica Fernandez, Nelson and Vielma Almonguerra, Dr. Nono Cosio and Inday "Teacher of the Year" Tutica.

Chua rules Shootout Drag Race at Clark

THE FIFTH leg of the Petron Blaze Shootout National Drag Race Championship Series was held last Saturday at Clarkfield, Pampanga, with Team Cabspeed's Angelo Chua ruling the Pro category.

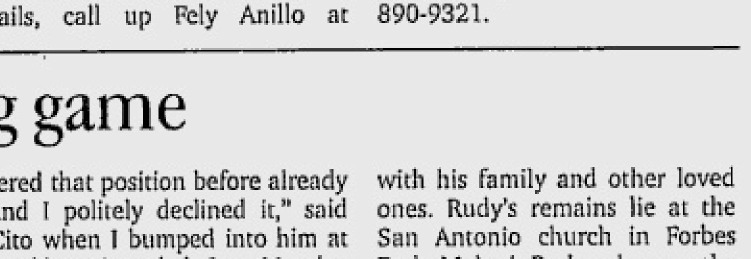
Driving his Honda Civic, Chua posted an elapsed time of 13.865 seconds to beat Steve Caldwell of Team Garage Power, who clocked 12.849 seconds.

Caldwell, however, eased out other competitors in the Quick 8 category with 12.525 seconds. Second place went to Team Autoworx's Tyrone Sason who posted an elapsed time of 12.849 seconds in his Honda Civic.

Tristan Joseph Pangilinan of Team Cabspeed in his Honda Civic took the spot in the Sportsman category, after posting a time of 14.280 seconds while second place went to his teammate Denis Paul Yogore.

The first place in the Hotstreet class went to Michael dela Cruz of Team Bolt-On, with a time of 16.970 seconds while the second spot was won by Voltaire Kwong of Team Autocraft.

The event drew 61 competitors from Manila and nearby towns like Pampanga, Baguio, Bulacan, Cabanatuan, Tarlac, Pangasinan and Dagupan.



TRISTAN Joseph Pangilinan of Team Cabspeed receives trophy and cash prize from Bebot Reyes of Activity Asia for ruling the Sportsman Class during the fifth leg of the Petron Blaze Shootout National Drag Race Series held recently at Clark,Pampanga.

The Petron Blaze National Drag Race Championship Series is sponsored by Petron Blaze and Ultron in cooperation with motorista.com.ph dragracingpinoy.com, 103.5 K-lite F, Roadwise Motoring school and Race Hour Motorsports Show.

SPORTSWATCH

Pascua, Batulan top La Union chess

HARIDAS Pascua and Mariel Batulan emerged as overall champions in the boys' and girls' divisions, respectively, in the recent Rimat Ti Amianan Kiddies' Chess Championships in San Fernando, La Union. Pascua, an 11-year old wonder from Mangatarem, Pangasinan, scored a perfect six points in the 14-under tournament supported by La Union Governor Victor Ortega and San Fernando City Mayor Mary Jane Ortega. The nine year old Batulan, a native of San Fernando, upset Brunei Asean Youth gold medalist Kyla Joy Camacho of Caba town in the last round to score five points in the two-day event organized by engineer Joseph Dumuk. Champions in the other categories were Roosenicole Ducusin of San Fernando (B-14), Jan Emmanuel Garcia of Sampaloc, Manila (B-10), Medy Vidal of San Fernando (G-14) and Allen Nikki Subang of Bauang (G-12). A total of 63 players signed up for the tournament ran by Gerwin Carbonell (arbiter) and Melchor Laceste (tournament director).

Gonzales settles for 4th in New York

FILIPINO IM Jayson Gonzales salvaged a draw with US Fide Master Dmitri Shelev in the final round and settled for fourth place in the Edward Lasker Memorial chess tournament in New York. The 33-year-old Armyman wound up with 6.0 points after winning four matches, drawing the same number of times and losing once to tie for second with two others. He actually finished with the same total like fifth-round conqueror, US vice champion Alex Stripunsky and American GM John Fedorowicz, but slipped to fourth when the tiebreak was applied. Super GM Jaan Ehlvest of Estonia, with whom Gonzales had also drawn in the third round, defeated US Master Juan Oscar Sena in the final match to win for the second straight year with a 7.0-point total. Gonzales, who earned his first GM norm at the Calvia Open Chess in Spain last October, is set to play in the Hasting International Chess Congress from Dec. 28-Jan.9, 2005 in Hasting, England before playing in the Gbratal Congress from Jan. 25 to Feb.9. ***NM Marlon Bernardino, Contributor***

Las Piñas 3-cocker lines up 50 fights

MORE than 50 non-stop exciting fights are lined up in another 3-cock derby tonight at the air-conditioned Las Piñas Coliseum with Sagupaan Complexor 3000 as sponsor. Veteran cocker-sportsman Rudy Sayaman, derby host, said the cash prize at stake is P300,000 for an entry fee of P5,000. Submission of weights is until 2 p.m. Another 3-cock event unfolds on Dec. 30, with Eddie Alejandro as host. Interested parties may call 874-3910 and 873-1040 for details. Meanwhile, preparations are now under way for the Super 2-Cock Ulutan/Fastest Kill on Feb. 17 and 19, dangling a guaranteed prize of P1.3 million for an entry fee of P3,300. Popular llamadores Abu Centeno and Renato Shio, who hosted the 297-entry Fastest Kill Challenge on Nov. 18, said the grand champion will win a house and lot (located at SM Bacoor) courtesy of VA Aguilar Properties.

GCAP to stage 12 big-time derbies

THE GENTLEMEN Cockers Association of the Philippines (GCAP), a group of prominent cockers and breeders, will present 12 big-time derbies (7-cock) at Las Piñas Coliseum beginning on Jan. 10 and 12. The derby circuit will be sponsored by Sagupaan Complexor 3000. Founded by sabong idol Patrick Antonio only this year, GCAP now boasts 35 members. The new GCAP members will be led by Rep. Gerry "Boy" Espina,William Go, Lito Orillaza, Strike Revilla, RJ Mia, La Union Group, Boy Legazpi, Bobbit Pies, ASF Group, James Uy, Rep. Ronnie Puno, Dini Cuenca, Archie Lacson, Ronnie Lacsina of UBBA, Gerry Alivia of Cagayan Valley, Arnold Mendoza, Tito Reyes, Mayor Cito Alberto, Ruel Ricafort and Tos Reyes. Heading the GCAP founding members are president Rudy Albano, Mayor Nene Aguilar, Gerry Ramos, Boy Royo, Tony Lasala, Pol Estrellado, Benjie Lim, GCAp Stagfighter Tony Faustino, Tony Marfori, Jenjen Arayata, Richard Perez, Pepito Ngo, Eric dela Rosa, Boy de Roca, Gov. Ito Ynares, Patrick Antonio, Jet Fernando, Sonny Lagon and Bulljack Fortaleza.

Derby prelims deferred to Dec. 27

THE SCHEDULED kick-off preliminaries today for the Noche Buena '04 5-Cock Derby, has been deferred to Dec. 27. This means that instead of two there will only be one merge elimination day on the 27th to be followed by the 3-cock finals on the 29th. This decision was reached yesterday afternoon after majority of the entries informed the Roligon Mega Cockpit office that they are just too busy to fight before Christmas. Submission of weights is set on Dec. 26 from 9 a.m. - 9 p.m. The derby is hosted by Rolly Ligon and sponsored by Thunderbird Power Feeds.

RACING TIPS

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Race 1--1. Fear Factor 2. Montezuma 3. King's Choice
Race 2--1. King Lance 2. Bingbong 3. Western Dancer 4. My Rabbonnie
Race 3--1. Pasiril 2. Blue Iris 3. Spoiler 4. Patutina
Race 4--1. Super Wind/Half Medium 2. Five O'Clock 3. Ilocos Pride 4. Ravon
Race 5--1. Amazing Firenze 2. Sovereign Queen 3. En Carta 4. I Don't Dance 5. Doctor Steve
Race 6--1. Naughty 2. Capricorn Alda 3. Mr. Bullseye 4. Honoree
Race 7--1. Deity 2. Blitzkrieg 3. Dynamic Jason 4. Parrot Moe 5. Open Sky
Race 8--1. Great Tower 2. Material Trick 3. Fine Offer 4. Reign of Fire 5. Beautiful Jaeda 6. Guts

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Post-Jordan Bulls finally learn how to string victories

DEERFIELD, Illinois—Well, well, well, look who has a little winning streak going.

The four straight victories by the Chicago Bulls would hardly be worth a mention for most teams. But consider that the Bulls haven't strung together this many wins since Michael Jordan was wearing red and black—six-plus seasons, three coaches and umpteen players ago—and it's a sign they might finally be making some progress.

"It's nice," Bulls guard Kirk Hinrich said on Tuesday. "But we've got to be realistic about where we're at and realize we still have a ways to go."

With an 8-15 record, it probably is a little premature to start clearing space in the trophy case or making plans for a victory parade in June. But for the first time since the dynasty was broken up, the Bulls are looking like a legitimate NBA team.

After opening the season 0-9 to match the franchise record for worst start, Chicago has won six of its last eight. If not for blowing a late lead against the Dallas Mavericks, the Bulls would have a six-game winning streak. Even with that awful start, this is Chicago's best record after 23 games since 1997-98, the last title run.

And unlike the last few seasons, when the Bulls tended to win a bunch in the last month against teams who were either out of it or resting up for the playoffs, their victories have been against some quality opponents. Three of the wins were against teams with winning records, and one came on the road.

"We kept coming in here and just trying to get better, no matter what was going on," Sudan-born rookie Luol Deng said. "It was hard to go out and try your best and not get the result you wanted. That's what happens sometimes. But nine games in a row was tough."

Try six years of it.

Michael Jordan and company put on one of the best shows in the history of any sport, winning six NBA championships in eight years in the 1990s. But when coach Phil Jackson zoomed off on his Harley-Davidson after the last title celebration, and Jordan appeared to be leaning toward retirement—his second, for those keeping track—then-general manager Jerry Krause decided to split up what was left of the dynasty gang.

Krause's hope was that he could avoid the tortuous rebuilding process other champions had endured. Instead, his various plans failed. Free agents snubbed the team, dozens of players came and went, and the Bulls tried various combinations of youngsters without finding the right blend.

"We've been trying to find a foundation for years," said John Paxson. *AP*

Cavs turn back T'Wolves

Shaq-less Heat shackle Celtics; Mavs rout Knicks

CLEVELAND—LeBron James had 26 points with 12 assists, and the Cleveland Cavaliers answered every time Minnesota threatened in the fourth quarter in a 107-97 win over the Timberwolves on Tuesday night.

Zydrunas Ilgauskas added 25 points, and Jeff McInnis had 21 for the Cavaliers, who kept their poise down the stretch against one of the Western Conference's top teams one game after they blew a 15-point lead in the fourth quarter and lost to Boston.

Kevin Garnett had 26 points, 13 rebounds and six assists for the Timberwolves. Sam Cassell added 19 points, and Troy Hudson 15—10 in a 2:24 span of the fourth—as Minnesota stormed back.

The Timberwolves played without forward Latrell Sprewell, who sprained his left foot last week.

In Miami, Dwyane Wade had 33 points and 11 assists, Udonis Haslem scored 18 points and tied a career-high with 17 rebounds, and Miami extended its winning streak to nine games by shackling the Boston Celtics, 108-100.

The Heat improved to an Eastern Conference-best 20-7, despite not having Shaquille O'Neal—who missed his first game of the season because of a left calf bruise sustained in Sunday's win over Orlando.

Eddie Jones added 17 points, and Damon Jones scored 12 for Miami, which has won all 15 games this season in which it eclipsed the 100-point mark.

In New York, Josh Howard had career highs of 26 points and 16 rebounds, and Dallas opened a 39-point halftime lead in a 123-94 demolition victory over New York.

Dirk Nowitzki scored 23 points, all in the first half, and Michael Finley added 21 for the Mavericks in what was easily their most lopsided victory of the season.

New York allowed Dallas to repeatedly score with ease on the inside, surrendering 100 points before the third quarter ended.

The Mavs eventually went ahead by as many as 46 in defeating the Knicks for the seventh straight time and securing their fifth consecutive road win.

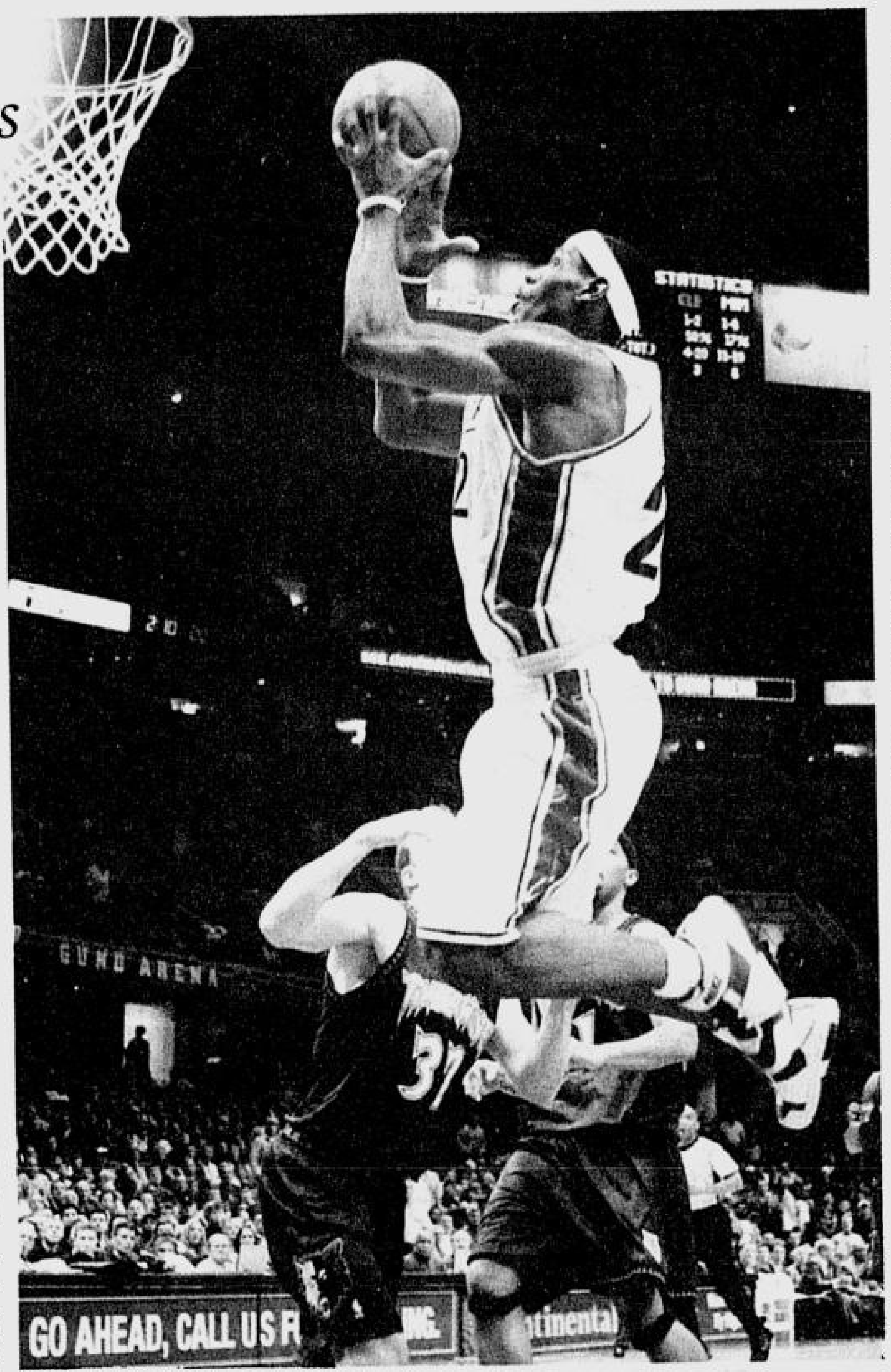
In Charlotte, North Carolina, Richard Jefferson scored 26 points, and New Jersey snapped Charlotte's five-game, home-winning streak with a 94-91 victory.

Jefferson scored 11 of New Jersey's final 14 points as the Nets won for the first time in four games. Vince Carter still hasn't played for New Jersey because of a sore Achilles' tendon.

In Sacramento, California, Peja Stojakovic hit five 3-pointers, and Mike Bibby scored seven of his 24 points in the fourth quarter of Sacramento's 104-93 triumph over Washington, the Kings' 16th victory in 19 games.

Stojakovic scored 26 points and Chris Webber had 20 points and 10 rebounds for the Kings, who lost top reserve Bobby Jackson late in the first half with a sprained right wrist.

In Los Angeles, Bobby Simmons scored 30 points, Rick Brunson scored 11 of his 18 in overtime and the Los Angeles Clippers beat New Orleans, 100-91, in overtime after blowing a 21-point, third-quarter lead. *AP*



CLEVELAND teen sensation LeBron James breaks down the defenses of the Minnesota Timberwolves during the second quarter of their game. REUTERS

'Big Unit' bid of NY falls apart; LA blamed

NEW YORK—The Dodgers withdrew Tuesday from the proposed three-team, 10-player trade that would have sent pitching ace Randy "Big Unit" Johnson from the Arizona Diamondbacks to the New York Yankees, who then criticized Los Angeles for "reneging" on the deal.

"As we sit here right now, the deal is no more," Dodgers general manager Paul DePodesta said during a conference call. "I've been saying all along that we weren't going to do the deal unless it made sense for this club in 2005, and that was not the case."

Los Angeles would've received right-hander Javier Vazquez from the Yankees along with two top prospects, catcher Dioner Navarro and third baseman Eric Duncan. The Dodgers also would've gotten pitcher Mike Koplove from Arizona.

Arizona would've obtained outfielder Shawn Green and pitchers Brad Penny, Yhency Brazoban and Brandon Weeden from the Dodgers. Along with Johnson, the Yankees would have gotten Japanese pitcher Kaz Ishii from Los Angeles.

"The Dodgers reneged on the deal that was agreed to last Friday, unequivocally and with no contingencies except for a window for contract extensions and physicals," Yankees president Randy Levine said. "For some reason, the Dodgers over the weekend started to backpedal. Why they would break their word is only something they can answer. It sure is disappointing, and we'll have to think long and hard before ever doing business with the Dodgers again."

Earlier in the day, an official of one of the teams and a person close to one of the players involved in the trade said the deal had been submitted early Tuesday to baseball commissioner Bud Selig for approval. The two spoke on condition of anonymity.

The official said the Dodgers gave the go-ahead to finalize the trade late Monday and early Tuesday, when two conference calls were held. One call involved the general managers and baseball executive vice president Sandy Alderson, and the other included ownership representatives and Selig. *AP*

Woods admits frustrations over swing

ORLANDO, Florida—Tiger Woods admitted his frustration with his swing struggles this year in an e-mail newsletter sent Tuesday but said two late-season victories have boosted his confidence for greater success in 2005.

Woods won in Japan last month and at the World Challenge event he hosts earlier this month against 15 elite rivals. But it came after a PGA season where his only victory came in the World Golf Championships Match Play event.

"It is frustrating when you can do it at home with your buddies but it doesn't carry over to tournaments," Woods wrote. "Obviously there's a lot more pressure, but you just have to keep working at it.

"I've been down this road before with swing changes. I did it with (swing coach) Butch Harmon and now I'm doing it with Hank Haney. The last time it took me two years to get it right. That's just part of the process."

Woods, whose stock answer of being just a little off the mark quickly became laughable as struggles continued, said he never sunk into despair over his re-working of the swing.

"I never really got that low because I was proving it to myself on the range," Woods wrote. "I knew it was in there. The key is going out and trusting your swing in competition.

"Just before I went to Japan for the Dunlop Phoenix, I was hitting balls on the range at Big Canyon Country Club and it clicked. I hit a beautiful 8-iron and finally did it right. When you do it right, you don't feel anything.

"I closed 2004 with eight-consecutive rounds in the 60s, which gives me lots of confidence for next year."

Woods was able to continue his streak of events without missing a cut but often faded from contention early. *AFP*

AT ONE point, Tiger Woods was at a loss with his swing.

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Mayol risks OPBF title vs Thai

Salven L. Lagumbay, *Contributor*

UNDEFEATED World Boxing Council No. 1 contender Rodel "Batang Mandaue" Mayol will defend his Oriental and Pacific Boxing Federation minimumweight crown against Thai challenger Phalangchai Sor Vorapin in a 12-round showdown topbilling the "Encounter in Manila" card on Jan. 29 at the Casino Filipino in Parañaque.

This will be Mayol's final tune-up bout before he vies for the WBC title against newly crowned champ Isaac Bustos of Mexico sometime next year.

"I can't wait to fight once again. Next year will be a breakout year for me. I promise that to my fans," said the Mandaue City-based Mayol.

The power-fisted Mayol remains unscathed in 19 fights with 15 KOs and is widely regarded as one of the country's premier world title hopefuls.

In the chief supporting bout, former Philippine flyweight champ Edgar "Bombardero" Rodrigo figures in a 12-round Pan-Asian Boxing Association flyweight eliminator against Thai Somyot Vor Surapol.

"These two headliners will surely light up the boxing skyline. It will be a war," said co-promoter Lope "Jun" Sarreal, whose LS International is putting up the show together with Stonewall Boxing Gym.

In other bouts, ex-RP junior fly king Wyndel Janiola takes on Elmer Muyco in a 10-round showdown, while sweet-punching Benedict Suico goes up against Ryan Malitig in a 6-round tiff.

The rest of the card pits Arnel Tinampay versus Yuri Nuda; Dandee Francisco versus Elmer Saligumba; Eric Rapada against Jun Labandia; and Randy Canon versus Ruben Hermosa.

MAYOL: Unscathed in 19 fights

Go wants more SEAG events, but less sports

ANOTHER round of talks with representatives of the 11 member nations of the Southeast Asian Games Federation may be necessary in case of last-minute changes in the calendar of sports and events for the SEAG the Philippines will host in 2005.

The subject of hosting another meeting with SEAG Federation members is likely to be included in the Philippine Southeast Asian Games Organizing Committee agenda when it convenes early next year after its most outspoken official expressed his apprehension over the current roster of sports.

Ways and Means Committee vice chair Go Teng Kok, also chair of the same committee of the Philippine Olympic Committee, is campaigning hard to have the number of events increased and the total number of sports decreased.

Go had explained his position to some Philsoc officials including its chair, Roberto "Obet" Pagdanganan, who said the body is keeping its options open regarding the issue.

"Mr. Go is a very experienced individual in hosting international events," said Pagdanganan. "He has had the opportunity of hosting the Asian Track and Field championships twice with more than 40 countries in attendance. He has a grasp of the details involved in hosting international events. We should listen to his inputs."

GO apprehensive over Games calendar.

Go, who is expected to get support from POC allies who are also part of the Philsoc, noted, however that this approach should not sacrifice the country's bid for the overall title.

The athletics association and chess federation president is believed to have the backing of Philsoc Ways and Means Committee Chair and POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco.

Pagdanganan stressed that the proposal of Go does not intend to bring down national sports associations which have not performed well in past sports events but to establish a "practical count" of medals which is necessary in the nation's bid for the overall crown.

"The approach of our officials who negotiated for us in the early stages, speaks of a grand hosting," said Pagdanganan. That is fine if we have the money. The reality, however, is that we have a lot of time but not enough money. We should be frugal because times are very uncertain."

Pagdanganan said it was not practical that a lot of commitments were made simply to accommodate requests from the SEAG member countries.

"Sports leaders in other countries will understand if we declare that we will host the games the best way we can but not to the detriment of our own economy," said Go.

Pagdanganan said the issues raised by Go are valid and will be addressed when the Philsoc holds its meeting after the holidays.

Ex-WBA champion Gamboa loses anew

THE STRING of losses by former World Boxing Association minimumweight champion Joma Gamboa continued since he announced his comeback from retirement as he was stopped yesterday by a much bigger Hengky Wuwungan in the third round in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Gamboa had announced his retirement last January this year following a failed attempt at winning the World Boxing Council 108-lb crown from Mexican Jorge "Travieso" Arce.

However, Gamboa decided to don his gloves 10 months later while serving as his own manager. He had little luck as fighter-manager, however.

He first lost a split decision to Indon Dickson Ton last Nov. 2 also in Jakarta. Barely a month later, Gamboa dropped another decision to Indon Angky Angkota.

It is obvious Gamboa is no longer the same fighter once feared in Asia while under the renowned Japanese manager Joe Koizumi and Cebu boxing patron Tony Aldeguer.

Under Koizumi, Gamboa had won the WBA Fedelatin light flyweight title, the WBA minimumweight interim title and then the WBA minimumweight regular title.

Gamboa turned pro after an outstanding amateur career under Aldeguer and went on to win the Philippine minimumweight crown.

Salven Lagumbay

GUYITO WILD HUNT

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Held last December 22, 2004, PDI Executives headed by President & CEO Sandy Romualdez (center) were at hand to draw the winners for Inquirer's Guyito Wild Hunt Promo. Also present were (from left to right) VP-Marketing Donald Lim, VP-Information Technology Garry Libby, SVP-Sales & Marketing Rene Reinoso, DTI Representative Virgilio Lamano, VP-Advertising Felipe Olarte and Associate Editor Abel Ulanday.

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Christmas minus loved ones

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

MY MOST vivid and happy memories of Christmases past invariably involve my mom.

Her absence last Christmas therefore was painful and marked by her loved ones' indescribable longing.

The passing of time hasn't made her absence less painful. I long for her even more now that the holidays are here again. The void she left remains a black hole in my heart.

Those who recently lost their loved ones—notably *Tita* Susan Roces, *Tito* Dolphy, *Tito* Joe and *Tita* Gina de Venecia now know what I mean as they go through their own Christmas minus very significant people in their lives. We can only empathize with each other and somehow try to have a merry Christmas.

On a lighter note, allow me to go on with tradition and make some Christmas wishes for my friends in show biz. They say our fond wishes are prayers in disguise. If we wish ardently enough, no doubt the whole universe will conspire to make them come true.

So here goes my Christmas 2004 wish list. . .

Pops Fernandez. A love that needs no explanation.

Ogie Alcasid. For his long-distance marriage to be intrigue-free.

Sharon Cuneta. For a baby boy to be her protector someday. More movies like "Crying Ladies."

Albert and Liezl Martinez. To become The Eventologists to beat as they continue to invent and create unique strategies in their new PR endeavor.

Cesar Montano and Sunshine Cruz. A baby boy who will look like both of them in equal parts.

Julius Babao and Tin-Tin Bersola. A smooth delivery for Tin. More projects for them as TV's lovable husband-and-wife team.

Dr. Vicki Belo. To have a cloning device in her clinics. True friends like her ought to be cloned.

Monsour del Rosario. To have a Mon Jr. soon whom he will train to become an Olympian like him.

TJ Manotoc. More cute little "masterpieces" for girlfriend Rio and him.

Boy Abunda. A talk show that goes on 24/7. Can't have enough of his wit and charm.

Ces Drilon. To set up a finishing school so she can share her tips on glamour and elan.

Butch Francisco. More hours in his day because he's never too busy to be a friend.

Yul Servo. More acting awards here and abroad.

True Faith Band. A new hit song to be my next "national anthem."

Maegan Aguilar. A hedonistic holiday in India with she-knows-who.

Rannie Raymundo. A brand new album ASAP.

Sheree. For her and Onemig Bondoc's love affair not to be one that will last only until further notice.

Maryo J. de los Reyes. A school for aspiring directors so they will imbibe his savoir faire.

And for you my dear readers, I wish you all the Christ-MUST-haves your little heart desires.

For feedback, e-mail wateringholeshangri-la@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaith-band.com

SeeeMall!

AYALA CINEMAS THX

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4 THE POLAR EXPRESS	4 HONEY	4 2046	GUARANTEED SEATS 4 BIRTH 1 05, 3 10, 5 15, 7 20, 9 25, 11 30	4 TAXI
5 NATIONAL TREASURE			GUARANTEED SEATS 5 NATIONAL TREASURE 1 30, 4 00, 6 30, 9 00, 11 30	5 HIGHWAYMEN

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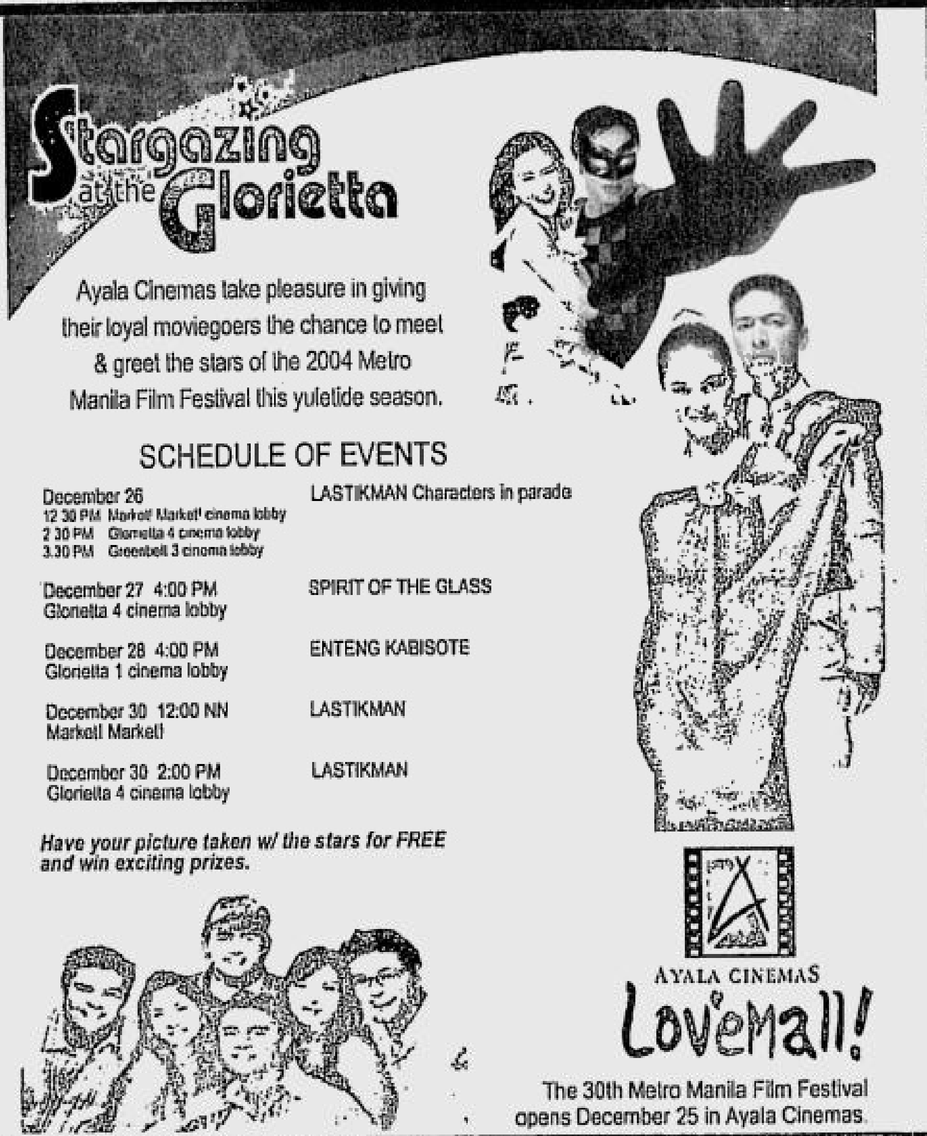

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Court junks libel case vs ABS

THE QUEZON City Prosecutor's Office has dismissed GMA-7's libel case against ABS-CBN for "lack of probable cause."

In a Dec. 3 resolution, Assistant City Prosecutor Dindo G. Venturanza ruled that the evidence presented by GMA-7 was insufficient to indict ABS-CBN, according to a statement from ABS-CBN.

The libel charge was prompted by ABS-CBN's Erwin Tulfo's and Lynda Jumilla's reports where they said GMA-7 had committed a violation when it aired the Angelo de la Cruz news footage of ABS-CBN.

Iraqi terrorists had kidnapped and held De la Cruz, a contract worker, for several days before releasing him.

The prosecutor's resolution stated that the term "*pagnanakaw ng* video," as mentioned by Tulfo and Jumilla, did not have defamatory imputation.

"The statements made were simply to inform the viewers of the alleged copyright infringement made by the complainants when they aired the Angelo de la Cruz footage," said the resolution.

It said "the utterances made by the respondents can be considered factual and true without unfair and uncalled [for] comments... broadcast in good faith and for justifiable ends."

Chow Yun-fat in 'Pirates' sequels

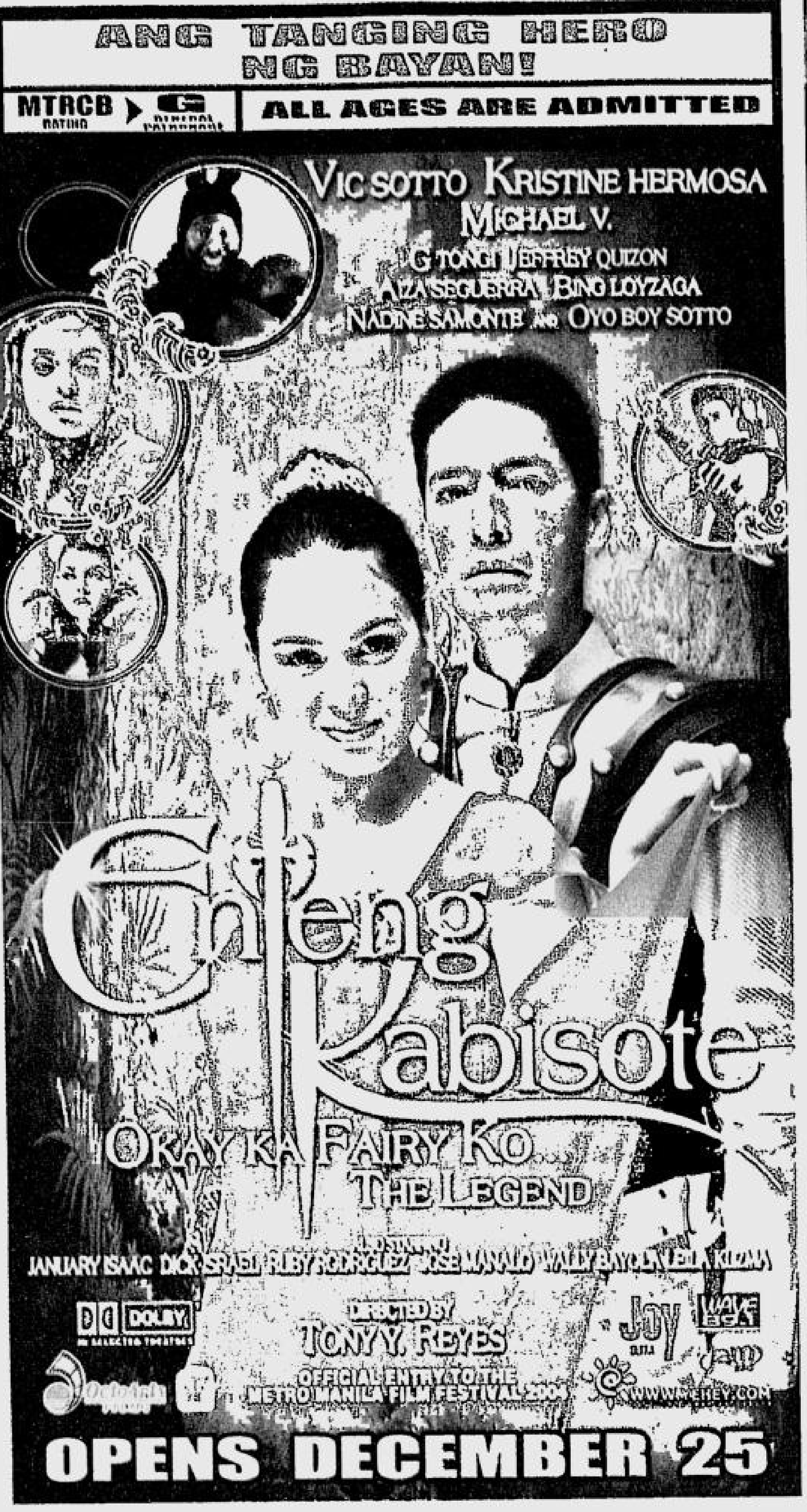
HONG KONG—Hong Kong action hero Chow Yun-fat is set to star in the upcoming sequels of box-office smash "Pirates of the Caribbean."

Chinese-language newspaper Apple Daily said Chow will play the famous 15th century Chinese pirate Cheung Po Tsai in the second and third installments of the film. He will team up with original cast members including Johnny Depp, Orlando Bloom, Geoffrey Rush and Keira Knightley.

Rolling Stone legend Keith Richards will play the father of Depp's character, Captain Jack Sparrow.

Chan said the movie's producer and director contacted Chow's management company in the US and director Gore Verbinski flew to Hong Kong last week to discuss the screenplay with Chow.

Chow made his name as a gun-toting hero in HK filmmaker John Woo's classics "Hard-Boiled" and "A Better Tomorrow." *AFP*


ANG TANGING HERO NG BAYAN!
MTRCB RATING ▶ G GENERAL PATRONAGE
ALL AGES ARE ADMITTED
VIC SOTTO KRISTINE HERMOSA
MICHAEL V.
G TONGI JEFFREY QUIZON
AIZA SEGUERRA BING LOYZAGA
NADINE SAMONTE AND OYO BOY SOTTO
Enteng Kabisote
OKAY KA FAIRY KO... THE LEGEND
JANUARY ISAAC DICK ISRAEL RUBY RODRIGUEZ JOSE MANALO WALLY BAYOLA LEILA KUZMA
DOLBY IN SELECTED THEATRES
DIRECTED BY TONY Y. REYES
OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2004
OctoArts Films
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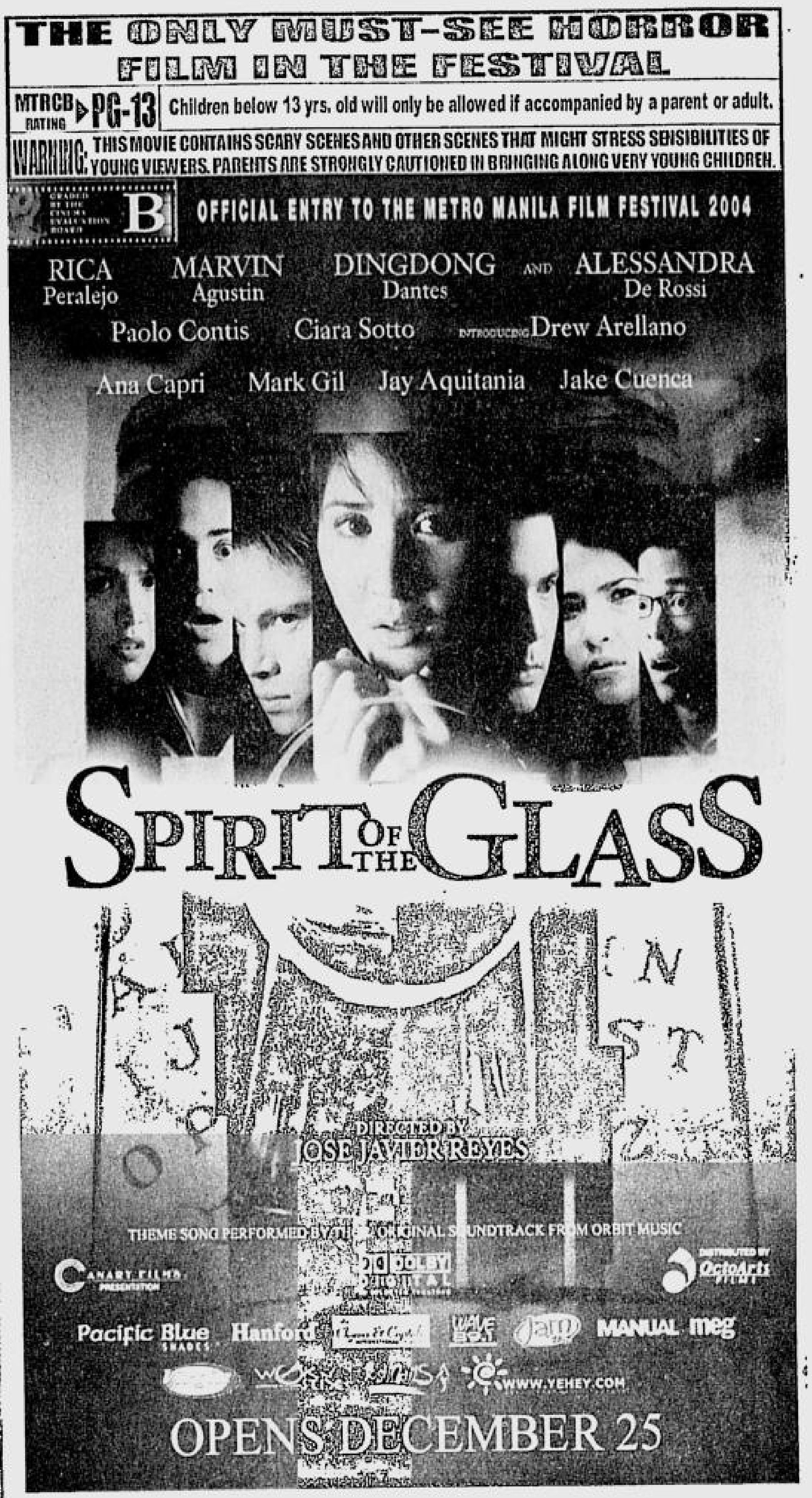
INA MAGENTA
ENTENG
FAYE
ITIM
MALIKMATA
BENOK
AIZA
Enteng Kabisote
OKAY KA FAIRY KO... THE LEGEND
HEAD
ROMERO
REYNA NG KADILIMAN
TAONG GAGAMBA
UNDER TAKER
TAONG PUNO
OPENS DECEMBER 25


THE ONLY MUST-SEE HORROR FILM IN THE FESTIVAL
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OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2004
RICA Peralejo
MARVIN Agustin
DINGDONG Dantes
AND
ALESSANDRA De Rossi
Paolo Contis
Ciara Sotto
INTRODUCING Drew Arellano
Ana Capri
Mark Gil
Jay Aquitania
Jake Cuenca
SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
DIRECTED BY JOSE JAVIER REYES
THEME SONG PERFORMED BY THE ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK FROM ORBIT MUSIC
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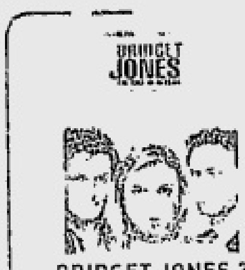

BRIDGET JONES 2
SUBJECT TO MTRCB RATING

In this follow-up to the worldwide hit, we find Bridget (Renée Zellweger) where we left her: blissful and besotted in the arms of gorgeous lawyer Mark Darcy (Colin Firth). Mark is accomplished, supportive and tolerant of all of Bridget's tiny jealousies. Bridget's pink clouds begin to turn grey as her attacks of self doubt sorely test her relationship with Darcy. And just when it seems that the waters couldn't get any more choppy, Bridget's former boss, womanizing heartthrob Daniel Cleaver (Hugh Grant) sails into view.

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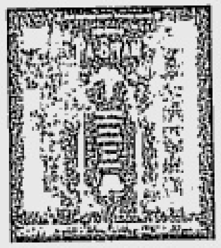

PASIYAM
SUBJECT TO MTRCB RATING

A mother dies, and her children come home to bury her. And like all dutiful children, observe the traditional nine-day novena for the dead or Pa-Siyam. The siblings reunite after years of estrangement. Like most families, this one has secrets. Unanswered questions. The children hope to ride over the tensions, leave the questions unanswered, bury the secrets as they buried their mother. To move on. For this family, it is not to be. Something horrible happened in this house.

Now Showing at:
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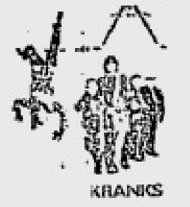

CHRISTMAS WITH THE KRANKS
SUBJECT TO MTRCB RATING

Luther and Nora Krank have made a decision. They're going to forgo Christmas. Luther is sick of the commercialism and the costs. So they're taking a cruise, but when their daughter calls saying that she's coming home they must get christmas together in 2 hours.

Now Showing at:
SM Pampanga | Davao | Cebu | Iloilo

LUZON

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1 AFTER THE SUNSET
2 TAXI
3 THE GHOST
4 NATIONAL TREASURE
5 ONE MISSED CALL
6 CHRISTMAS WITH THE KRANKS

sm city baguio
1 TAXI
2 BRIDGET JONES 2
3 POLAR EXPRESS
4 PASIYAM

sm city batangas
1 DARKNESS
2 POLAR EXPRESS
3 THE FORGOTTEN
4 SURVIVING CHRISTMAS

sm city marilao
1 SAW
2 THE FORGOTTEN
3 THE GRUDGE
4 AFTER THE SUNSET

sm city bacoor
1 ONE MISSED CALL
2 BCUZ OF U
3 2046
4 ALEXANDER
5 NATIONAL TREASURE
6 BIRTH
7 HELLWOLF
8 NED KELLY

sm city dasmariñas
1 PASIYAM
2 THE FORGOTTEN
3 THE GHOST
4 CELLULAR

sm city lucena
1 POLAR EXPRESS
2 THE FORGOTTEN
3 SAW
4 CELLULAR

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

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2 ALEXANDER
3 CHRISTMAS WITH THE KRANKS
4 HELLWOLF
5 THE GHOST
6 PASIYAM
7 TAXI
8 OUT OF REACH

sm city iloilo
1 DARKNESS
2 RESERVED
3 CHRISTMAS WITH THE KRANKS
4 AFTER THE SUNSET
5 SURVIVING CHRISTMAS
6 NATIONAL TREASURE
7 RESERVED
8 SAW

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2 BRIDGET JONES 2
3 OUT OF REACH
4 AFTER THE SUNSET
5 PASIYAM
6 CHRISTMAS WITH THE KRANKS

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2 PASIYAM
3 BRIDGET JONES 2
4 POLAR EXPRESS

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Understanding the 'new' Susan Roces

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

THROUGHOUT her public life, Ms **Susan Roces** has been known as the epitome of graciousness, beaming sweetness and light to the gratified edification of everyone around her.

Last week, however, when she was interviewed by ASB-CBN's **Karen Davila**, Susan threw viewers (and Karen!) for a loop when she criticized the TV network in no uncertain terms for what she felt was biased reporting in the last elections, and for casting painful aspersions against her husband, then presidential candidate **Fernando Poe Jr.**

In place of "sweet" Swanie, the "new" Susan bristled, lashed out, and let loose with stirring broadsides against the network, reducing the startled Karen to humbly apologizing for whatever pain ABS-CBN's electoral coverage had caused the Poe family.

Right after the telecast, viewers called each other to express surprise at the unexpectedly *palaban* Susan they had just seen on the tube.

For her part, Susan explained that she had been thinking and feeling these things for a long time, but had kept her peace in deference to her peaceable husband's wishes.

Now that he was gone, however, she felt she could finally give voice to her feelings of hurt and betrayal, which many of FPJ's followers shared.

Despite Susan's explanation, many viewers were still bowled over by Susan's radical "transformation," from nice kitten to feisty tiger.

However, those who really know Susan weren't all that surprised by her succinct, no-nonsense tirade. We reminded ourselves that Susan Roces' first starring role in the movies was as the scrappy title character in "Ang Boksingera." Enough said!

And, despite the fact that she was built up as a sweet leading lady ("the face that refreshes"), Susan was bubbly rather than blandly beautiful on the big screen.

Even her goody-two-shoes screen characters were sweet only up to a point. When they had been taunted beyond endurance by Sampaguita Pictures' resident *kontrabidas*, they fought back!

Well, that's what the real-life Susan did on TV last week, and we'd better get used to her more assertive and less compliant persona, which we'll be seeing more of in the coming months.

In her TV interviews, Susan has also been saying that she plans to actively push for the societal reforms that FPJ wanted to achieve, and that many Filipinos today are calling for.

Well and good, but we wish that she would also assume a bigger leadership role in the Filipino movie industry, which she and Ronnie have loved so much for so many years.

As everybody knows, Filipino movies are in particularly dire straits, and the industry needs forceful and caring leadership to survive its current crisis. Susan could do a lot in this regard.

More personally, we hope that Susan supports our suggestion that the Philippines should finally put up a good, state-of-the-art film archive, and that it be named the Fernando Poe Jr. National Film Archive of the Philippines.

We have made this recommendation in recognition not only of FPJ's love for Filipino movies, but also for his pioneering efforts in film preservation and restoration.

With Susan's support, the film archive will more quickly become a reality, and our movie people, as well as our millions of viewers, will benefit from it for many years to come.

'Teen Titans'

AT 6:30 p.m. on Dec. 23, Cartoon Network screens "Tiny Titans," a superhero series that some viewers describe as "Archive" meets "Justice League."

A team of young superheroes (Robin, Cyborg, Starfire, Beast Boy and Raven) fights crime and learns to get along.

The Titans' adventures are more upbeat than the Justice League's. They're fun-filled teenage situations in action-packed environments, told in single episode arcs.

In today's episode, "Transformation," the beautiful alien Starfire gets scared when she grows tusks on her neck, scales on her skin, and hideous claws in place of fingernails. Is she turning into a horrible monster?

Feedback

FROM Ellen Redoblado of Makati City:

"My wish for the local show biz world this Christmas is for entertainers to realize their enormous power for good and for bad.

"All too often, they're in show business just for themselves, for fame and fortune. They don't realize that they may be behaving in ways that give a bad example to their young fans.

"To them, it's only business, *walang personalan*, as they love to say, but it's much more than that.

"This Christmas, I hope they will decide to use their strong influence on their audience to do good instead of bad . . ."

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CRISTINA GONZALES, husband Alfred Romualdez and father, former actor Jose Mari

FPJ death...

From page A26

principal sponsors at his wedding.

"Whenever there was a problem in the industry, we ran to FPJ," Jestoni recalled. "He was a really good person. He earlier said he had a project for the two of us. Too bad we can't do it now. Nobody can replace him, but I know there are a lot of people in the business who will work together to save the industry."

Makeup artist Fanny Serrano said he would never forget FPJ's thoughtfulness: "He would always bring special food to my parlor, like *kalderetang kambing* (goat meat stew). When he was filming 'Kahit Konting Pagtingin' with Sharon (Cuneta, Fanny's client), he noticed the collapsible dresser that I brought to the set. When I told him that I designed it, he asked me to do two pieces for him. Turned out that he bought it for his movie company, so that his leading ladies would have a dresser even if they were shooting in the mountains."

In time, Fanny said, "God will reveal to us the reason behind FPJ's sudden death. One day we'll be able to say, '*kaya pala*' (so that was why)."

Ace cinematographer Romy Vitug, who took shots of FPJ for the ads that the actor did for San Miguel Beer, marveled at Da King's sense of humor and accessibility to all kinds of people.

"When I was elevated to the Famas Hall of Fame," Vitug recalled. "It was FPJ who presented my award. Afterwards he told me, '*Ginawa mo akong* extra (You made me a bit player).' I was hesitant to invite him to my birthday party once, but when I did, he readily said *yes*—and he showed up."

A gentleman

He previously asked the son of former Sen. Santanina Rasul why the Muslim populace liked FPJ, Vitug said, and the reply was: "Because he's a gentleman."

While these show biz denizens acknowledge the pervading gloom that threatens the box-office performance of the forthcoming Metro Manila Film Festival, they remain hopeful that for the love of FPJ, the Filipino people will troop to the theaters once again.

"That's why I ask people not to [wallow] in grief," Serrano said. "Instead, we have to support local movies to prove that the movie industry didn't die with FPJ."

Besides, Revilla pointed out, "Supporting the film fest is something that would have made FPJ very happy."

FORMER actress Janet Bordon (in pink) remembers FPJ's "remarkable humility"

Hatakin ang inyong loved ones ngayong pasko.
JOHN ESTRADA DANILO BARRIOS
ELIZABETH OROPESA JOEL TORRE MARK GIL BEARWIN MEILY
TUESDAY VARGAS MIKEL CAMPOS
AND CHERIE GIL AS LASTIKA
SARAH GERONIMO
MARK BAUTISTA
AS
MARS RAVELO'S
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'FPJ's death should unite industry'

By Jocelyn Valle
Contributor

THE PASSING of Fernando Poe Jr., acknowledged King of Philippine movies, should be a challenge to both his colleagues and audience to keep alive the industry that he loved and which, in recent years, has seen a rapid decline.

This is the call of all show business denizens—great and small, active and retired, working on and off cam—who paid their last respects to the iconic star, director and producer on Tuesday night at the Sto. Domingo Church.

"It's a big responsibility, filling his shoes," admitted Sen. Bong Revilla, who also became famous as an action star like FPJ. "But we'll try to achieve his dreams for the industry. We have to do something about its present state, which is hampered by taxes and piracy. We should not, and we will not, let the industry die. There are three of us actors in the Senate (Jinggoy Estrada and Lito Lapid are the other two) and I'm sure we all feel the same way."

Revilla took FPJ's untimely demise as a wake-up call for everybody in and out of the business. "We should all unite, especially in a crisis like this. I hope other politicians will also support the movie industry," he said.

A vacuum

Ricky Davao believed that the decline in the movie industry is a global trend that affects even Hollywood. "People are talking about this," he said, "and so there has been a keen consciousness about the business."

Scriptwriter Roy Iglesias warned that the death of FPJ has left a vacuum in the business. "He's a pillar of the industry. If you lose a pillar, the structure is in danger of crumbling. We really don't know what's going to happen.

"At the same time, this has united the industry. Everybody's thinking of how to keep his memory alive. We cannot let the industry die."

Rudy Fernandez said everyone within the industry was more than willing to do his part, but that the audience should also help. As for FPJ, he said, "He is irreplaceable. He's not just an industry leader; he's also a father, a brother and a godfather to all of us."

Kay Torres, whose mother, slain actress Nida Blanca was close to FPJ and his wife Susan Roces, agreed: "*Nakakapanghinayang* (It's such a pity). I just tell myself that my mom and Tito Ron are now together and somehow I'm comforted. Still I feel bad because Tito Nestor (De Villa, Nida's on-screen partner) has also died. And my mother's case has not been solved. When I condoled with Tita Susan, I told her that now we have both experienced a huge loss."

Humility

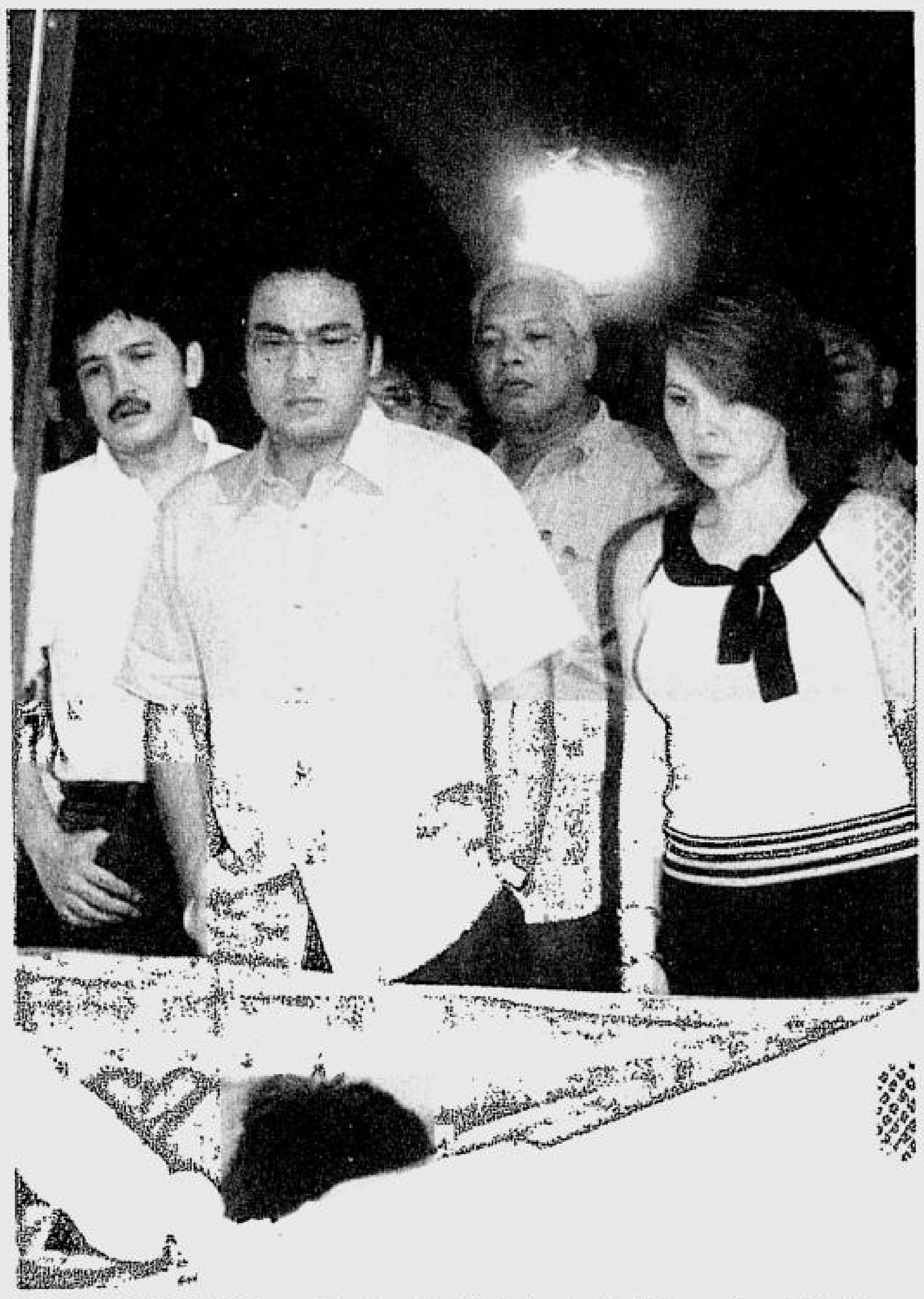
Former actress Janet Bordon said it might take a while before Philippine show business goes back to normal.

"We lost a king and a leader," said Janet. "I never did a movie with him, but I did one under his company, which starred Tita Susan. I will never forget that he was such a gentleman. And his humility was remarkable."

Actor and Rizal Vice Gov. Jestoni Alarcon recalled getting valuable advice from FPJ, one of the

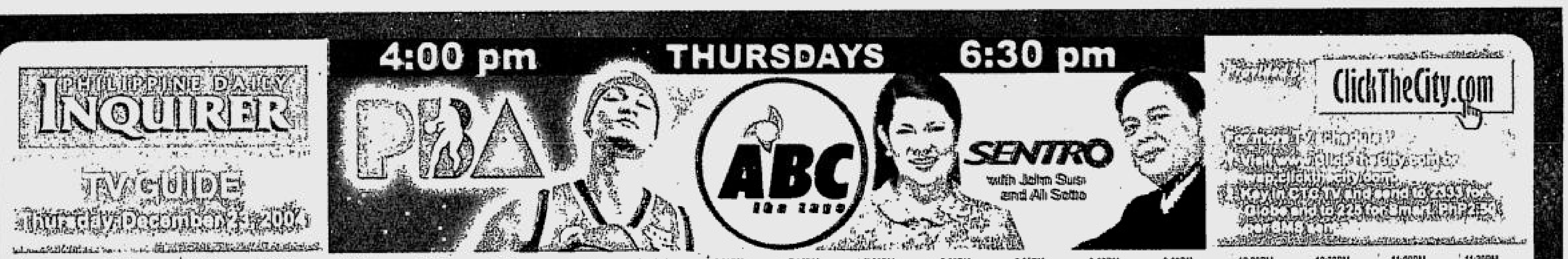
FPJ'S/A25

PRECIOUS ADVICE was received by Jestoni Alarcon (left), with Phillip Salvador.



INDUSTRY WON'T DIE, vows Sen. Bong Revilla, flanked by Rudy Fernandez and Kay Torres, daughter of the late Nida Blanca.

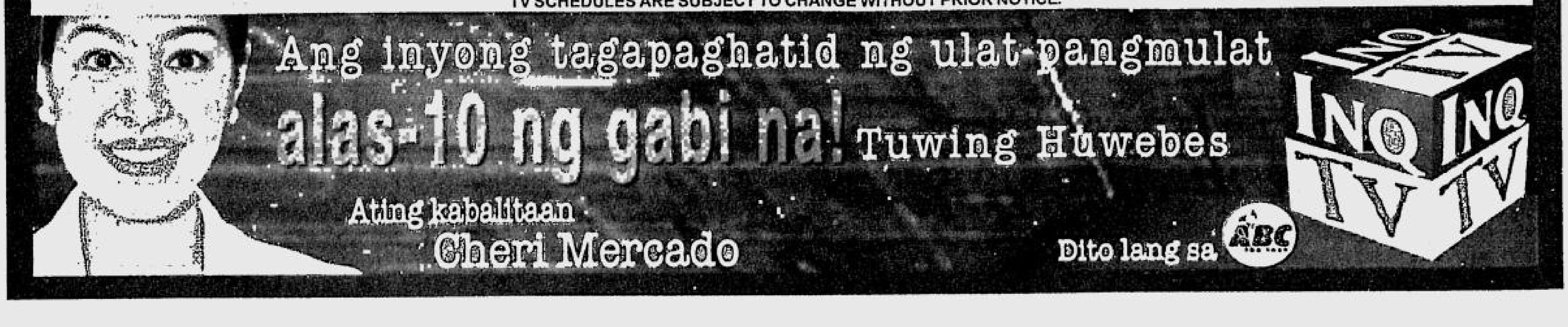
JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN



PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
Thursday, December 23, 2004
4:00 pm
THURSDAYS
6:30 pm
PBA
ABC
SENTRO
with John Susi and Ali Sotto
ClickTheCity.com

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABS-CBN 2				Showbiz No. 1	Sandara's Romance	Get Backers	Ragnarok	Masked Rider Ryuki	TV Patrol	Spirits	Krystala	Lovers in Paris	Hiram	Star Circle Nat'l Teen Quest	Maalaala Mo Kaya			Insider	Dong Puno
NBN	Value Vision				Teledyaryo	Value Vision		APEC Primer 3		Network Forum		Teledyaryo		Musconi Cup 2003				Dial M	
ABC 5			Problema Nyo Sagot Ko	PBA					Sentro	PBA					Big News	Inq TV		Fearless Fighting	Billboard On-Air
GMA 7	Leya (2:45 PM)	Joyride (3:15 PM)	Snow Angel (3:45 PM)		One Piece	Witch Hunter Robin	Slam Dunk	24 Oras		Extra Challenge		Mulawin	Starstruck (8:45 PM)	Forever In My Heart (9:15 PM)		Magpakailanman			Saksi
RPN 9	Metro TV Shopping			Hey Arnold	As Told By Ginger	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	Entertainment Tonight	Wrestling		NBA On RPN					Newswatch Now	Video Hit Parade	Kasangga Mo Ang Langit	Police Hour
IBC 13		V League				IBC Express Balita		Home Shopping Network		Home Shopping Network		Travel	Japan Video Topic		Entrepinoy	Good Take	IBC News Tonite		
Solar		WWE Smackdown				Mutant League	Harry Gear	Maxsteel	Dungeons And Dragons	Babylon V		Thunder Box		JAG		Stir Of Echoes			
Nickelodeon	Dora The Explorer	Little Bear	Blues Clues	Fairly Odd Xmas		Are You Afraid of the Dark	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	The Brother's Garcia	Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	Fairly Odd Xmas		All That	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	Rocket Power	The Wild Thornberrys	The Brother's Garcia
MYX		Urban MYX	MYX Backtrax	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mellow MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	MYX Presents		My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX	Mellow MYX
ETC		Good Morning Miami	What I Like About You	The Today Show		Starting Over		NBC Nightly News	Entertainment Tonight	Will & Grace	JKX	Ed		Girls Behaving Badly	Simple Life 2	Tonight Show With Jay Leno		Blind Date	Fifth Wheel
Cinema One		Pag-ibig Ko Sa Iyo'y Totoo				Idol				Cuora Episode 4				Shake Rattle & Roll 1				Ang Tanging Ina (Movie)	
Studio 23	Bewitched	Urban MYX	MYX Backtrax	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	X-Men Evolution	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Wazzup Wazzup		Barkada Nights				News Central	The Oprah Winfrey Show		Spin City
AXN		The President's Man: Ground 0				The Amazing Race		Gensomaden Saiyuki	Gensomaden Saiyuki	7 Days		30 Seconds To Fame	30 Seconds To Fame	The 4400		The Glass House			
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares	Home Improvement	Ally McBeal		The Simpsons	The Drew Carey Show	Star News Asia	Friends	Smallville		The Simple Life/ The Chronicle: News From The Edge		For Love Or Money: My Big Fat Obnoxious Fiance		Friends	Smallville
CNN				Business International		Larry King Live		World News	World Sport	Business International		World News Asia		World News	Global Office	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
National Geographic	On Assignment	Innovation		Frontiers Of Construction		Riddles Of The Dead		The Snake Wranglers	Croc Chronicles Dr. Brady Barr	Wild		About Asia		Nat'l Geographic Specials		Innovation	Frontiers Of Construction		
Solar Sports		ATP Stockholm Open '04 Finals			Sounds of the Finals	Danish Open '04 Final MatDMS					Greatest Moments in NBA History		NBA TV Daily	NBA New Orleans vs. L.A.Lakers					NBA Action
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens Of	The Fix	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Molto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped	Tyler's Ultimate	Love Chain	You're Invited	Good Finds	Clean House		Breathing Room	Genuine Article	Planet Parent	Sara's Secrets
HBO		Lone Star (3:15 PM)					Fletch			The Presidio (7:15 PM)				Tears Of The Sun				Simone	
Star Movies			Detention (3:45 PM)				Roommates				The In-Laws (7:20 PM)			That Thing You Do				Wrong Turn (10:50PM)	
Cartoon Network	Scooby-Doo Show	The All New Popeye Show		Richie Rich	Baby Looney Tunes	Sylvester & Tweety Mysteries	Police Academy	He-Man & The Masters Of The Universe	Teen Titans	Yu-Gi-Oh	Gundam Seed	The Looney Tunes Show		Courage The Cowardly Dog	The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy	The Addams Family	The Funky Phantom	Boomerang - Boomeraction	Yu-Gi-Oh
ESPN	UCA Nat'l High Schl Cheerleading C'ship FL USA	World Pool League '04 Warsaw Poland		2004 Acc/Big 10 Chall Nrth Carolina vs Indiana				2004 Acc/Big 10 Chall Virginia vs Northwestern				Sportscenter Taiwan	World Pool League '04 Warsaw Poland		2004 Women's Trick Shot Magic CT USA		2004 World Summit of Pool NY NY USA		Sportscenter Taiwan
Disney Channel	Kim Possible	Totally Spies	Lizzie Mcguire	Even Stevens	That's So Raven	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	The Legend Of Tarzan	Lilo & Stitch/Un-talkative Bunny	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney			My Wife And Kids	That's So Raven	According To Jim	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney	
Cinemax			Rolling Thunder (3:45PM)			Julia Walking Home (5:15 PM)				Strictly Ballroom (7:15 PM)				Hollywood Homicide				Dead in the Water	
Hallmark Channel	Mad About You	Cavedweller				Play With Me Sesame	Sesame Street		Bewitched	Mysterious Ways		Strong Medicine		Boyfriend For Christmas			Sue Thomas: F.B.Eye		Mysterious Ways
Discovery Channel		Hour Asia				Wild Discovery		Ultimate Discovery		Monster Garage		Extreme Machines		Wild Discovery		Ultimate Discovery		Power Zone	
MTV Philippines		MTV Asia Hitlist		Non-Stop Hits		Non-Stop Hits	05 MAA Nominee Specials	MTV Get Spotted	MTV Loveline	Non-Stop Hits	MTV U-Break	MTV Jams	Rouge	TRL		Globally Dismissed	Pimp My Ride	VH1 Hits/ Video Collection	
Sports Plus	Superbowl3 Jets vs Colts			Porsche md 7&8	Golf Academy 2002	Big 12 College Regional					Raceworld		Superbowl II Green bay vs. Oakland			Davis Cup Finals Spain vs USA			
EWTN	A Christian Pilgrimage To Jordan	Angelus (3:15PM)	Suffering Church	Angel Force	Children's Rosary	The Holy Rosary With Mother Angelica and the Nuns Of Our Lady Of Angels Monastery	The Spirit Of Catholic Leadership	Saints: A Closer Look	EWTN Gallery	EWTN Live With Father Mitch Pacwa		Pope John Paul's Legacy To The Family	Council Of Faith	Daily Mass		Angelus (10:15PM)	Holy Spirit In The Church	The Journey Home	

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.



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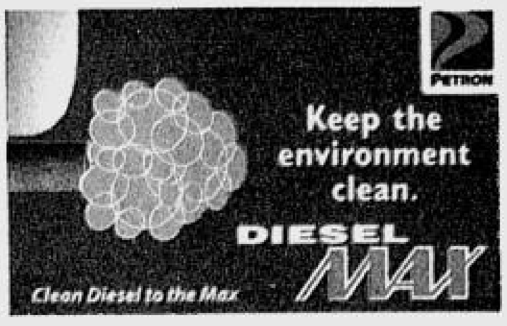
Assistant Editor Corrie S. Narisma

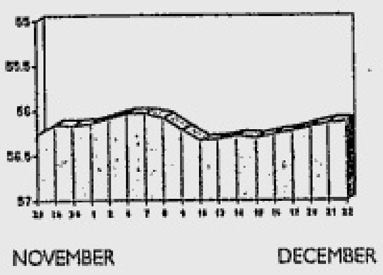


Neda says economy grew 6.1% in '04

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE



P 56.125 : $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 22, 2004

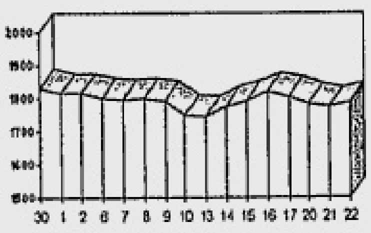
Y 104.21 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 22, 2004

GOLD: $ 441.80-442.30
per ounce Hong Kong, Dec. 22, 2004

STOCK MARKET

Shares close 0.8% higher

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

SHARE prices closed 0.8 percent higher yesterday, lifted by bargain-hunting after three days of falls and overnight gains on Wall Street, dealers said.

They said concerns that the massive funeral of movie star and defeated presidential candidate Fernando Poe would turn into an anti-government rally had limited the market's gains.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index gained 14.29 points to close at the day's high of 1,789.74.

Volume totaled 1.85 billion shares worth P458.9 million, from 615.8 million shares worth P584.27 million on Tuesday.

The broader all-shares index was up 2.26 points at 1,146.56.

Gainers led losers 35 to 30, with 42 stocks unchanged.

"Investors are quite hesitant to position in the market aggressively due to rumors of a possible destabilization plot after the (Poe's) burial," said Astro del Castillo of First Grade Holdings.

But he said the market still had the momentum to go up further Thursday "should nothing untoward happen today."

Movie star Poe, who lost to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in May's presidential election, died on Dec. 14 after suffering a stroke.

He was buried after a funeral procession attended by hundreds of thousands of supporters.

Authorities earlier warned they had uncovered plans to use the funeral as a focus for anti-government sentiment, but Poe was laid to rest without incident. *AFP*

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL Economic and Development Authority said the country's economy, as measured by the gross domestic product (GDP), likely grew by 6.1 percent for 2004, beating most forecasts including the government's original target of 4.9 to 5.8 percent.

According to Scholastica Cororaton, head of the Neda's policy and planning division, the economy was buoyed partly by the strong performance of the services sector, which was estimated to have grown by 7.1 percent for the year.

The growth of the services sector was partly attributed to the mushrooming of investments related to business process outsourcing (BPO), which covers services rendered by call centers. The Neda said the country would be banking on the strength of this sector next year to compensate for a possible slowdown in the output of the electronics industry due to the predicted slowdown in global demand.

Cororaton said the agriculture sector likely expanded by 5.8 percent this year, while the industry sector grew by 4.8 percent.

"With these figures, our assessment for the full year is that GDP growth will settle at 6.1 percent," Cororaton said in a telephone interview, adding that official figures on the 2004 GDP would be announced in January.

The Neda said that the above-target GDP growth indicated the economy's resiliency despite the government's gaping fiscal deficit and the acceleration of consumer prices that weighed down on spending habits.

According to Cororaton, the country's robust economic performance for the first three quarters of the year helped the economy maintain growth at the 6-percent level despite a slowdown in the fourth quarter.

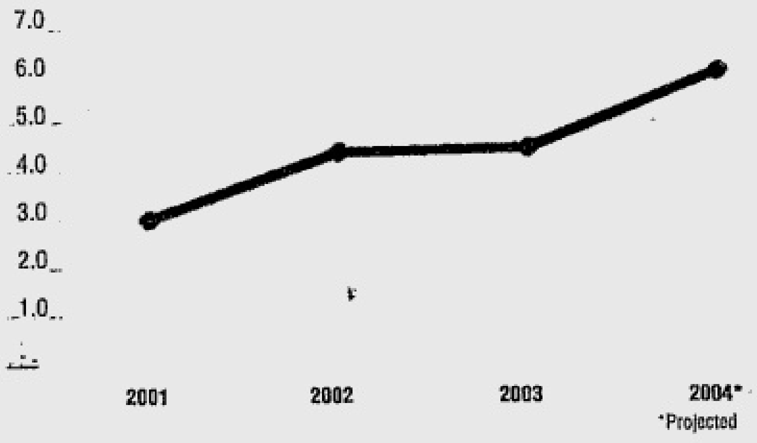
Cororaton said GDP growth for the fourth quarter dipped to below 5 percent. The recent typhoons that adversely affected production of the agriculture sector, which accounts fir a fifth of the economy, were partly to blame for the slowdown.

The fourth-quarter growth was much lower than the 6.4 percent, 6.6 percent, and 6.3 percent recorded in the first three quarters of 2004.

The National Statistics Coordination Board (NSCB) earlier said GDP growth would likely be cut by 0.35 percentage points in the fourth quarter because of the effects of typhoons Unding, Violeta, Winnie and Yoyong.

According to the Department of Agriculture, some P2.7 billion worth of palay, corn, coconut and other agricultural and fishery products were destroyed by the typhoons in November and early this month. The NSCB said the amount was equivalent to 1.7 percentage points of the output of the agriculture, fishery and forestry (AFF) sector in the fourth quarter.

GDP



Power shortage seen in Mindanao in mid-2005

By Abigail L. Ho

WITH the El Niño weather phenomenon seen coming again next year, Mindanao residents may be in for rotating brownouts if no new capacity is added to the main grid soon.

Ramon Abaya, chair of Cagayan de Oro Power and Light Co. (Cepalco), explained that the main grid's heavy dependence on hydropower for its electricity needs was a huge disadvantage in times of drought.

Next year, he said the April-June period would prove critical for the main grid as the water level in Lake Lanao, the body of water that runs the turbines of the Agus hydropower plants, would likely hit critical levels.

Should the projected occurrence of the El Niño phenomenon actually take place in the second quarter of 2005, he said this would probably result in a water level pattern similar to that in 1998 when the level sank below the 699.15 meters that National Power Corp. and National Transmission Corp. considered critical.

Below critical levels, he said the Agus plants would not be able to run, resulting in a power supply shortage. This lack of power supply would then give rise to hours-long brownouts that would hurt the Mindanao region's steadily booming economy.

At present, he said the Mindanao grid's power reserve was already very low. The supply-demand gap, including reserves, would hit a very thin margin of 16 megawatts (MW) by March next year.

POWER/ B2

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RP seen averting credit downgrade

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES could avoid a credit rating downgrade next year from major international agencies, as it succeeded in getting unpopular and painful fiscal measures off the ground, according to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

BSP managing director for investor relations Corazon Guidote said in her year-end economic briefing that while reforms were slow in coming, particularly in addressing the budget deficit, at least there was progress.

Guidote cited the steps taken by the state-run National Power Corp. to raise an additional $1.5-$2 billion from the privatization of its transmission assets.

Napocor recently raised $561 million from the sale of the 500-megawatt Masinloc Power Plant.

She also noted that Napocor's initial power rate increase of 89 centavos per kilowatt-hour will likely bring in P8 billion in additional revenues this year, and another P32 billion in 2005.

Guidote also noted the progress in the passage of tax bills, such as those on lateral attrition and the rationalization of fiscal incentives.

Another positive development cited was the Supreme Court's decision on the Mining Act, allowing 100-percent foreign investments in the sector.

She expressed confidence that more significant progress would be seen in time for the visit in January of representatives of the major credit rating agencies.

Guidote said that a team from S&P was scheduled to arrive in January, along with teams from two Japanese credit rating firms—Japan Rating and Investment Information Inc. and Japan Credit Rating Agency.

She said it was crucial that progress in implementing reforms be seen as S&P was finding it increasingly difficult to justify its "stable" credit rating outlook on the country, given the "negative" outlook by Fitch and Moody's.

Fitch, which visited in November, spared the country from a downgrade but put a "negative" outlook, which meant that a downgrade was still possible in the near term.

Moody's, which visited early this month, is expected to release its latest evaluation report in January.

Guidote, who is quitting her post by the year's end, said the recent progress indicated the Arroyo administration's commitment to the following:

- achieving fiscal consolidation in the medium term by increasing revenues and reducing consolidated debt;
- restructuring the power sector with the immediate privatization of Napocor and implementing short-term painful measures to restructure power rates;
- deepening the capital markets by giving more teeth to regulators and giving the right vehicles in which primary and secondary financial markets can thrive; and,
- increasing exports and investments with more provisions for infrastructure and a standard set of investment incentives.

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Ayala extends contract with InterContinental

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

AYALA Hotels Inc., the hotel operations arm of the Ayala group, has agreed to extend the management contract of InterContinental Hotels Group for InterContinental Manila for another year.

The contract expires at the end of December.

InterContinental Manila opened in 1969 and is one of the longest operating hotels in the Makati Central Business District.

The hotel is owned by Ayala Hotels' wholly-owned subsidiary Enjay Hotels Inc., while the InterContinental Hotels Group takes care of management and operations.

"We are pleased with the extension and recognize the long partnership between Ayala and the InterContinental Hotels Group which goes back all the way to the pioneer days of the Makati Central Business District," Ayala Hotels president Jaime Ayala said in a statement.

"By leveraging both companies' expertise, we have established InterContinental Manila, a veritable icon in this dynamic city. We value the relationship with Ayala Hotels Inc. and look forward to continuing with Ayala Hotels under Jaime Ayala's leadership," added A. Patrick Imbardelli, managing director for InterContinental Hotels Group Asia Pacific.

InterContinental Manila first opened its doors 35 years ago and now features 338 guest rooms.

Apart from InterContinental Manila, InterContinental Hotels Group has two hotels, Holiday Inn Galleria in Ortigas Center, and Holiday Inn Clarkfield in Pampanga. The group's fourth hotel , Crowne Plaza Galleria Manila, is scheduled to open next year.

Revenues from Ayala Land's hotel operations, which account for 9 percent of consolidated revenues for the nine-month period, improved by 22 percent to P1.13 billion owing to higher occupancy and room rates compared to the previous year.

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December 16, 2004

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For us in the Prelature of Infanta, which was hardest hit by the recent flash flood tragedy, Christmas must go on. It must be solemnly celebrated.

As we carry the heavy load of pain and suffering at this time, we are consoled and strengthened by the generous hearts and hands ready to help us during our immediate and urgent needs. During those moments of urgency, YOU WERE THERE TO HELP US!

In behalf of the Prelature of Infanta/Aurora, I convey my sincerest gratitude for your kindness, assistance both material and for our funds, concern and prayers.

We are strengthened that you are still with us as we continue to help rehabilitate and rebuild people's lives and families. We think of how the Holy Family experienced suffering and uncertainty as well. Like Mother Mary and St Joseph, we hold on to our faith that God is with us.

Emmanuel is the cry of our hearts; the song of our lips. God is with us in the Child Jesus!

Thank you again, and may God bless you and your loved ones in the way He alone knows best!

Merry Christmas!

Sincerely in Jesus,

+Rolando J. Tria Tirona, OCD
Bishop - Prelature of Infanta.

Julio Xavier Labayen, OCD
Bishop Emeritus - Prelature of Infanta

Rev Fr. Israel Gabriel
Social Action Director

Deacon Mario Van Loon, ACT
Relief Operations Director

Donations may be sent to Mt. Carmel Shrine Parish, Broadway St. New Manila, Quezon City., c/o Sis. Zenia Pinaga, AMP or Bro. Dodong Nazario, OCD.

Compliments of Mirant Philippines

Power shortage

From page B1

The grid would have no reserves and even a power deficiency in the succeeding three months.

According to data from Transco's Mindanao System Operations, the Mindanao grid would have a shortage of 56 MW in April, 79 MW in May and 5 MW in June.

Abaya said that the only way to prevent this scenario from taking place was to install additional capacity as soon as possible.

Band-aid solutions, like the transfer of power barges to the Mindanao grid from other areas in the country, would help address the power crisis situation in the near term.

For the longer term, however, he said more capacity should really be added to the grid.

To help arrest the looming power crisis, he said Cepalco sister firm Mindanao Energy Systems Inc. (Minergy) would be boosting its power generation capacities.

Abaya said Napocor was already in talks with Minergy to fill in the power supply shortfall that the El Niño would likely bring to the Mindanao grid by early next year.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 22, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank, Inc.	2.9	2.95	2.9	2.9	11,389,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	26.5	27	26.5	27	330,100
Bank of the Phil. Islands	51	51.5	51	51	211,400
China Banking Corp.	575	575	575	575	50
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	46	46.5	45.5	46	61,200
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.43	0.43	0.42	0.42	460,000
International Exch. Bank	16.75	16.75	16.75	16.75	108,200
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	26	27	26	27	317,500
Philippine National Bank	22.75	22.75	22.75	22.75	13,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	13.75	14	13.75	14	14,100
Union Bank of the Phil.	23.25	23.25	23.25	23.25	300
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Manulife Financial Corp.	2485	2485	2485	2485	70
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1810	1815	1810	1815	600
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	18.5	18.5	18.25	18.25	1,200
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.68	1.72	1.68	1.7	5,059,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	910	955	910	955	48,620
Ipeople Inc.	2.85	2.9	2.8	2.9	140,000
Liberty Telecoms Holdings	0.39	0.39	0.38	0.38	150,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	1,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	2.5	2.5	2.46	2.46	2,567,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1290	1310	1290	1310	55,200
Ivantage Corp.	0.7	0.7	0.68	0.69	2,180,000
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.011	10,500,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	15.5	15.75	15.5	15.75	22,100
Manila Electric Co. B	24.75	24.75	24.5	24.5	413,500
Petron Corp.	3.2	3.2	3.15	3.15	1,700,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.08	1.08	1.04	1.04	299,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7	53,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.18	1.18	1.18	1.18	42,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	230,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	100,000
Union Cement Corp.	1.98	1.98	1.94	1.94	656,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	15,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	31	31	30.5	30.5	72,700
Jollibee Foods Corp.	28	28	28	28	110,300
San Miguel Corp. A	57.5	58	57.5	57.5	33,700
San Miguel Corp. B	74.5	75	74.5	75	75,200
Vitarich Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	20,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0042	0.005	0.0042	0.005	96,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.0048	0.005	0.0048	0.005	9,000,000
Ayala Corp.	6.5	6.5	6.4	6.5	4,438,000
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	1,450,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	18,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	12	12	12	12	5,000
A. Soriano Corp.	1.52	1.52	1.52	1.52	100,000
APC Group Inc.	0.0575	0.0575	0.0575	0.0575	500,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	75,000,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	25,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	20,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	15.75	15.75	15.75	15.75	6,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	10,880,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.75	3.8	3.75	3.8	2,782,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1	1	1	1	350,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	4.7	4.7	4.65	4.7	163,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	30.5	30.5	30.5	30.5	160,500
Global Equities Inc.	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	1,000,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	2.95	2.95	2.8	2.8	437,000
Macroasia Corp.	2.22	2.42	2.16	2.4	2,848,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.22	1.22	1.22	1.22	133,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.33	0.34	0.33	0.33	11,460,000
Polar Property Holdings	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	10,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.08	1.1	45,000
South China Resources Inc.	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	50,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.135	300,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Active Alliance Inc.	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.42	10,000
Euro-Med Lab. Phil. Inc.	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	20,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.56	1.62	1.56	1.62	20,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	30,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.6	0.61	0.6	0.61	300,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	1.08	1.1	1.08	1.1	502,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.57	0.58	0.57	0.57	440,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	100,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp.(Pdr)	18.25	18.5	18.25	18.5	992,500
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Q	10	10	10	10	1,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,700
PLDT 10% Pref Series Bb	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,300
PLDT 10% Pref Series Cc	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,800
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	8.5	8.5	8.4	8.4	73,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	7	7	7	7	3,036,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	10,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.245	0.245	0.24	0.24	2,230,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.34	470,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.1	1.12	1.1	1.12	7,536,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	350,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.52	1,600,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	10,000
SM Development Corp.	1.32	1.32	1.32	1.32	3,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.6	4,145,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	0.34	0.38	0.34	0.38	110,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	95,100,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	3.85	3.85	3.85	3.85	19,000
Benguet Corp. A	3.25	3.3	3.25	3.3	90,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	3.4	3.45	3.4	3.45	92,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.29	0.35	0.29	0.35	91,270,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.4	0.45	0.4	0.45	44,260,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.017	0.019	0.017	0.019	535,100,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.025	0.027	0.025	0.027	396,600,000
Omico Corp.	0.0046	0.0048	0.0044	0.0048	273,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.66	0.67	0.66	0.67	1,500,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.69	0.71	0.69	0.71	1,510,000
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.185	0.19	0.185	0.19	210,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	10,000,000
Interport Res.	0.0034	0.0034	0.0032	0.0032	40,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.0032	0.0034	0.0032	0.0034	18,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0048	0.0048	0.0048	0.0048	15,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0048	0.0048	0.0048	0.0048	30,000,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.041	0.045	0.041	0.044	28,300,000

DISCLOSURES

BENEDICTO Valerio was appointed assistant corporate secretary of International Exchange Bank.

* * *

PILIPINO Telephone Corp. confirmed that the National Telecommunications Commission has approved the transfer and issuance of Piltel shares to affiliate Smart Communications Inc.

* * *

PHILIPPINE Savings Bank (PSBank) has established a risk management committee to be chaired by Arthur Ty, and a corporate governance committee to be chaired by Regis Puno.

* * *

PSBANK declared regular cash dividends of P0.20 per share based on the outstanding capital stock payable to all stockholders of record (date to be fixed after Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas approval).

* * *

ERIC Wu aka Hsin-Hao was appointed director of Chinatrust (Phils.) Commercial Bank Corp., effective Dec. 21, replacing James Chen, who resigned.

ISLAND Information and Technology Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on Jan. 19, 2005 at 2 p.m. at the Casino Espanol de Manila, T.M. Kalaw Street, Malate, Manila. ***Compiled by D.J. Yap, PDI Research***

CURRENCIES

December 22, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.747887	1.000000	56.1280
Japan	Yen	0.007169	0.009586	0.5380
United Kingdom	Pound	1.441553	1.927500	108.1867
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.096134	0.128541	7.2147
Switzerland	Franc	0.648588	0.867227	48.6757
Canada	Dollar	0.607051	0.811688	45.5584
Singapore	Dollar	0.456056	0.609793	34.2265
Australia	Dollar	0.572348	0.765287	42.9540
Bahrain	Dinar*	1.983891	2.652661	148.8886
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.199437	0.266667	14.9675
Brunei	Dollar	0.454671	0.607940	34.1225
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000080	0.000107	0.0060
Thailand	Baht	0.019182	0.025648	1.4396
UAE	Dirham	0.203656	0.272309	15.2842
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.337100	75.0487
Argentina	Peso	0.253736	0.339271	19.0426
Brazil	Real	0.278335	0.372162	20.8887
Denmark	Kroner	0.134519	0.179866	10.0955
India	Rupee	0.017114	0.022883	1.2844
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.196839	0.263193	14.7725
Mexico	New Peso	0.066931	0.089493	5.0231
New Zealand	Dollar	0.531283	0.710379	39.8722
Norway	Kroner	0.120996	0.161784	9.0806
Pakistan	Rupee	0.012570	0.016807	0.9433
South Africa	Rand	0.132602	0.177302	9.9516
Korea	Won	0.000709	0.000948	0.0532
Sweden	Kroner	0.111225	0.148719	8.3473
Syria	Pound	0.014407	0.019264	1.0812
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023125	0.030921	1.7355
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000390	0.000522	0.0293

Naia-3 seen operating within 6 mos

By Clarissa S. Batino
and Ronnel W. Domingo

THE ARROYO administration wants to open and fully operate the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 within the first half of 2005 following government moves the other day to takeover the mothballed airport, a top aviation official said.

Alfonso Cusi, general manager of the Manila International Airport Authority, said airport authorities have started to work with engineering groups to ensure that the infrastructure was safe and secure for commercial operations.

The government had claimed that the Naia-3 had more than 40 construction defects.

Cusi said the government would also task an independent audit firm to conduct an inventory of the airport's facilities and equipment. The MIAA operates the Naia domestic and international airports.

The new terminal was built to replace Naia-1, which was more than 20 years old. Naia-3 is designed to handle 28 aircraft at any given time and 13 million passengers a year.

The government said that once the new terminal is operational, Naia-1 would be closed for repairs.

Cusi said Naia-3 would be open to all passengers within six months, "barring any threat to its structural integrity."

"This is our priority. The President has ordered that all necessary repairs and completion of pending construction jobs be finished within six months and we will do that," the airport chief said.

Cusi called the government's decision to expropriate the Naia-3 complex as a "lawful act." He said this demonstrated the Arroyo administration's political will.

Trade Secretary Cesar Purisima said the other day that under the rules of court, the government could immediately take over the Naia-3 terminal after filing the expropriation case, notifying the defendant, and paying a deposit that would cover final payment for the property.

Business groups also welcomed the government's move to expropriate airport terminal, which they said was vital for renewed investor interest in the country.

Ramon R. del Rosario Jr., chair of the Philippines-United States Business Council, said in a statement the move meant that the terminal could begin to serve the needs of local travelers and foreign visitors.

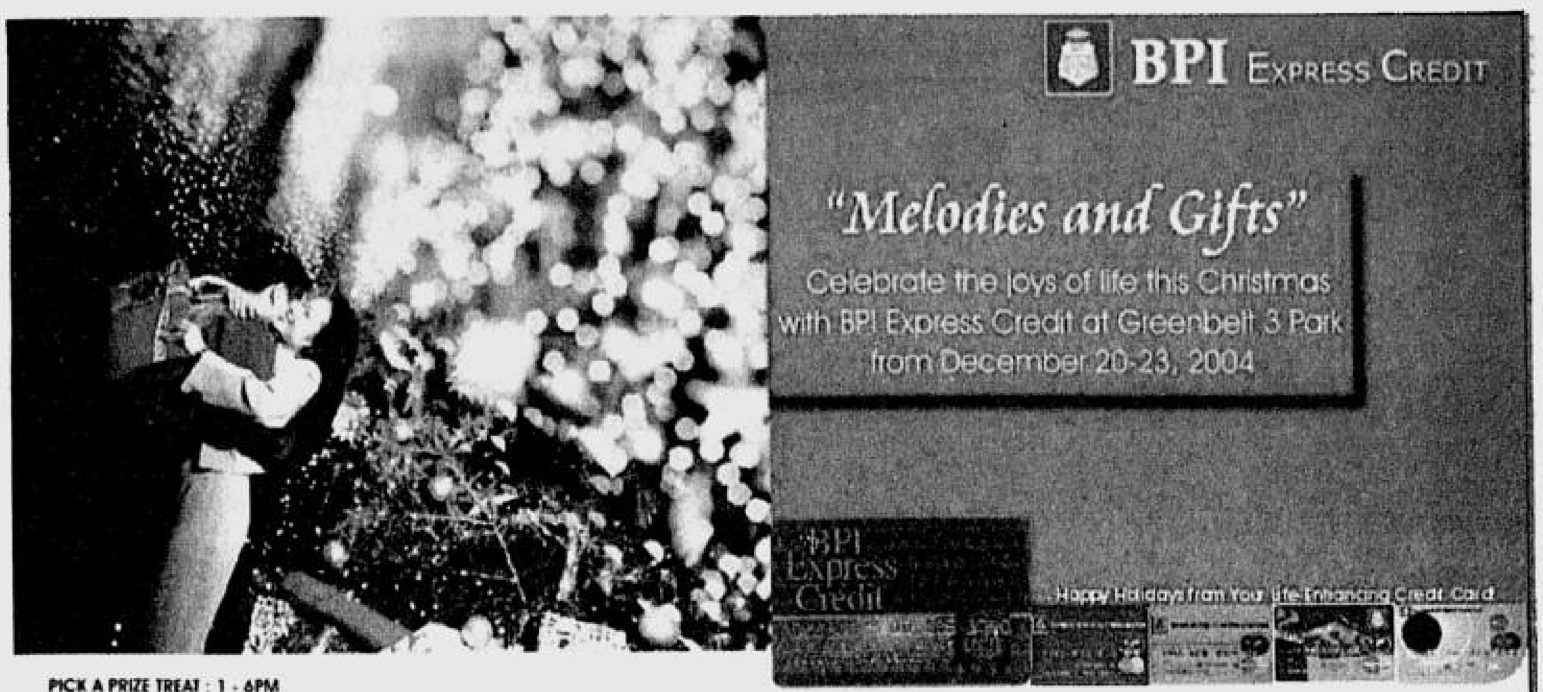
"We are equally pleased that the expropriation proceedings come with the assurance from the government that it would pay fair and just compensation for the facility," Del Rosario said.

He added that in a meeting between the RP-US and the US-Asean business councils last September, Naia 3—and its being operational—was identified as a key infrastructure project that would help stimulate the confidence of investors in the country.

"It is most gratifying that concrete action has now been taken on (our recommendation)," Del Rosario said.

Peter Wallace, president of the Wallace Business Forum, said the move would improve the country's image in the international community at a time when it is the only nation in Southeast Asia that does not have a good terminal.

"Foreign chambers have been lobbying to the government to open the terminal for about a year and we are glad the government listened," Wallace said.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- Monday, December 20: [illegible]
- Tuesday, December 21: [illegible]
- Wednesday, December 22: [illegible]
- Thursday, December 23: [illegible]

MELODIES AND GIFTS PROMO MECHANICS [illegible]

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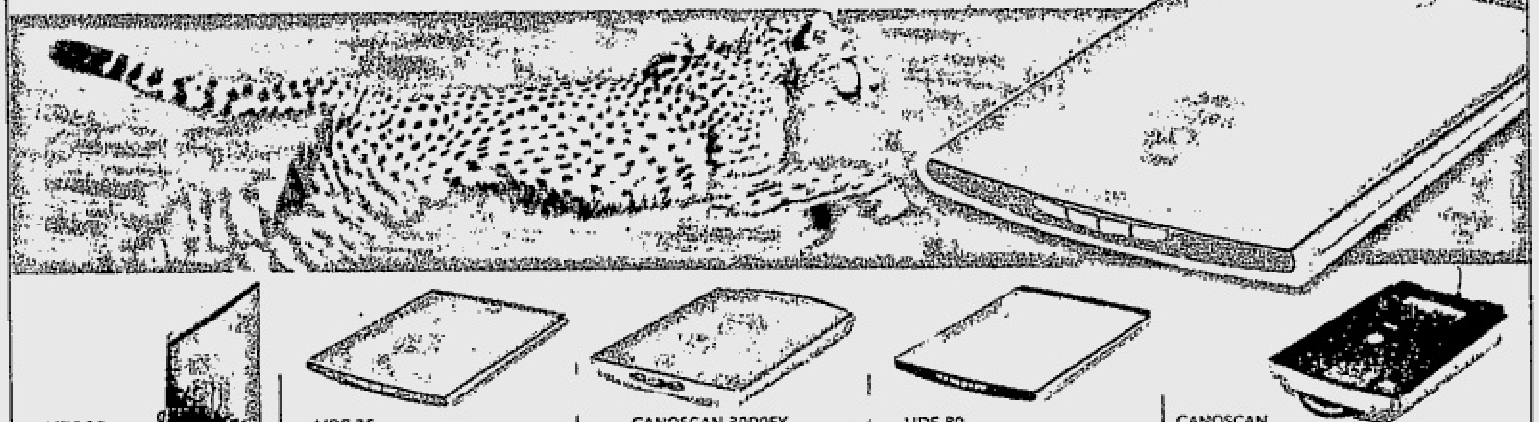

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CANOSCAN 5200F
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Japan firm gets permit to search for oil

By Abigail L. Ho

TAKING advantage of the Supreme Court's recent reversal of a landmark decision on the local mining law, the Department of Energy awarded on Tuesday an oil and gas exploration contract to Japan Petroleum Exploration Co. Ltd. or Japex.

Service Contract No. 46, which the DOE finally awarded to Japex after a long period of uncertainty, covers the area over the Tanon Straits in Negros Occidental.

"The Supreme Court ruling has indeed opened doors of opportunities in our petroleum exploration business. We are hopeful that these projects will bear fruit and give us new discoveries to boost our bid for energy independence," Energy Secretary Vincent Perez said in a statement yesterday.

He added that the new partnership should further enhance the country's relationship with Japan.

Just last week, the DOE awarded Service Contract No. 45 to Hong Kong-listed firm South Sea Petroleum Holdings Ltd. for oil and gas exploration activities over the Agusan-Davao Basin in Davao.

As early as 2002, the DOE awarded Japex a geophysical study and exploration contract (GSEC), which involves the conduct of initial studies to determine the prospects of the area.

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Valid for departures from Manila from 10 to 31 January 2005. Travel must be completed by 03 February 2005. Seven (7) days advance purchase applies. Tickets must be issued between 15 December 2004 and 24 January 2005. All fares quoted are per person based on non-accruable Economy Class travel, and exclude taxes, fees and other surcharges. Two persons must travel together. Stop in Singapore not allowed for tickets beyond Singapore. Same rate applies for children below 12 years old. Other terms and conditions apply.

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NORTH LUZON	Tuguegarao	Baguio	Dagupan La Union
CENTRAL LUZON	Balibago, Pampanga Iba, Zambales	Angeles Baliwag Sta. Cruz, Zambales	Lipa Batangas - P. Burgos San Fernando, Pampanga Sta. Cruz, Zambales Tarlac Malolos
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Editor **Aries Espinosa**

Sony Ericsson celebrates color

SONY Ericsson Color Play, held at the Ayala Museum, was this season's first fun foray of great food, great music and great images as Sony Ericsson celebrated another successful year. Since making the industry's first full-color mobile phone with the T68i, Sony Ericsson has led mobile phone users to new dimensions in experiencing mobile communications.

Photographer Ronnie Salvacion provided business partners, industry colleagues, dealers and guests with instant portraits on the S700i, that swinging new cellphone in a unique swivel design capable of 1.3 megapixel digital images.

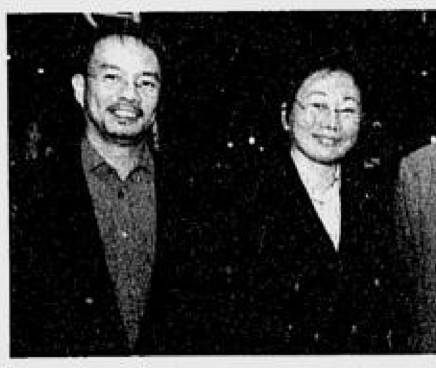
Sony Ericsson had the Museum Plaza decked with a sumptuous buffet dinner, digital display and a lady on a swing (just like the Sony Ericsson S700i Swing It ad).

Guests lined up for photos against an Oscar Awards-style backdrop of Sony Ericsson and were blown away by the sharpness and clarity of these instantly printed shots from the S700i. Small wonder Mobile Experts Inc president Teodoro G. Alberto was the envy of all for winning the S700i in the raffle.

The Sony Ericsson S700i camera phone has become the season's must-have stocking stuffer and has joined the ranks of other Sony Ericsson bestsellers: the P910i, K500i and K700i. Sony Ericsson Phils GM Dennis Manzano, joined onstage by guest of honor corporate VP and head of Asia Pacific Region Kazuo Nakai, toasted the great year that was for Sony Ericsson and honored the partners that helped get them there.

Host Joel Trinidad kept the evening lively as Akafellas and Anna Fegi, accompanied by the multi-talented Toti Fuentes, rendered a colorful and impressive repertoire of jazz, pop and even Christmas songs.

Sony Ericsson ended the evening on a high note, with gifts of music CDs for everyone. The songs, all related to color, are a fitting reminder that for a full range of experience in mobile communications, Sony Ericsson is the name that soars.



SONY Ericsson Phils GM Dennis Manzano, Globe Telecom head-wireless sales and distribution Lizanne Uychaco and Sony Ericsson corporate VP and head of Asia Pacific Region Kazuo Nakai.

ASIA BREWERY UTILIZES 2GO RRTS

In support of the government's Strong Republic Nautical Highway, Asia Brewery Inc (ABI), makers of Beer na Beer, recently partnered with Aboitiz freight group 2GO, which has adapted the RRTS (Road RORO Terminal System) - a service that promises a more cost effective means of distributing products with a faster and more efficient service. 2GO offered the RRTS service to ABI as the new means of distributing their beer products from Cagayan De Oro to Cebu. After a one-month trial period using the RRTS service, ABI was satisfied with the efficiency and the amount of savings they enjoyed while using the RRTS. And just recently ABI agreed and came to terms on the Memorandum of Agreement with 2GO Solutions for the RRTS service covering the Cebu-Cagayan-Cebu link. ABI is also interested in using the RRTS service for their Cagayan-Tagbilaran-Cagayan, Cagayan-Dumaguete-Cagayan and Cagayan-Tacloban-Cagayan (via Cebu and Ormoc) link. Shown shaking hands during the MOA signing are: (left) Anthony Dy, ABI VP - national operations services and (right) Mike Camahort, SVP and COO, 2GO Solutions.

PHOTO BY JOSEPH AGCAOILI

CMAP ANNUAL NEWSBOYS CHRISTMAS PARTY

The Circulation Managers Association of the Philippines (CMAP) organized recently the successful staging of the annual newsboys Christmas Party held at the Rizal Memorial Track and Field Stadium. Over 5,000 newsboys in Metro Manila attended the affair feted with fun, games and lots of prizes. Photo shows the circulation managers of various newspapers and magazines posing for a souvenir shot before the formal opening of the affair: (from left, kneeling) Dante Castro (Malaya), Rodrigo Cardino (Abante), Jun Binegas (Bulgar), and Lino Minor (Abante); (standing, from left) Inquirer SVP for sales and marketing Rene Reinoso, Marlon Mariano (Businessworld), Olive Pozon (Bandera/Tumbok), Connie Victorino (Peoples Journal), Cristy Licup (CMAP secretary), Norie Villanueva (Atlas), Renato Cayanan (Graphics), Menchie Adivoso (Newsbreak), Gilbert Sison (Balita), Rose Fernando (CMAP trustee), Jess Mallare (Manila Bulletin), Nanette Deza (Abante), Raul Esguerra (Abante), Lu-Ann Quijano (Abante), Lito Sala (Pilipino Star Ngayon/PM) and Inquirer circulation manager for sales and promotions Bien Baltazar.

Mozcom offers Smart card-based solutions

THE SMART card, a plastic card with an embedded microprocessor silicon chip, is widely used for industries like transportation, telecommunications, healthcare, government, banking, manufacturing and retail. The applications include keeping track of loyalty points, stored value debit cards or electronic purses, secure identification system, access entry security and many more.

"Smart card technology is an integral component of e-commerce solutions. Because you can store a large amount of offline data into it securely, it paves the way for offline applications or those where it is impractical to have an always-on IP connection. Examples may include your personal medical history stored on the card's chip so that in case of an emergency, hospitals can pull out the information from the card without needing to connect to some central database first. Financial transactions can also benefit in using debit cards because the value is stored right on the card. There is no need to set up an infrastructure to provide real-time verification unlike with credit cards," said Dick Chiang, Mozcom's CTO/COO.

Smart cards can also be integrated with Point-of-Sale applications for debit payments and loyalty points tracking. Together with fingerprint scanning technology, it can provide a secure identification system that can be used in numerous applications. "Instead of keeping fingerprint templates on a central online database, you can store it right on the card," Chiang adds. "Banks can perform customer identification and verification at any of their branches by just matching the fingerprint with the template stored on the card."

Mozcom carries an affordable line of USB-based Smart Card readers that complies with PC/SC, EMV Level 1 and MS WHQL standards. Popular ISO-compliant memory cards and full microprocessor cards are supported. Contactless, contact-based and simple balance readers are available.

For companies who want to set up Smart card-based applications without the trouble of in-house development, Mozcom can customize a solution. You may visit http://www.mozcom.com/netprofit or call 848-2606 for more details.

FLOUR DIVISION
gift

FAIRY TALE X-MAS WITH URC FLOUR'S GIANT GINGERBREAD HOUSE

This Yuletide season, Universal Robina Corporation Flour Division brings to the Philippines an age-old Christmas tradition from Europe and North America: a giant gingerbread house, now on display at the 2nd level of Robinsons Galleria. Made with no less than Universal First Class Flour, this quaint cottage brings to life the magic of the much-loved tale of Hansel and Gretel. Kids and adults alike will definitely be enchanted with this unique display which will run for the whole month of December. As an added treat, kids can have their pictures taken with Santa Claus from Dec. 11 to 26, from 12 noon to 2 p.m. and from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Special goodies will also be given away to lucky mall visitors. Shown in photo during the recent ribbon cutting ceremonies are URC Flour QC manager Nicanor P. Ines; URC Flour sales manager Naida D. Ebora; Santa Girl; URC Flour general manager Ellison Dean C. Lee; JG Summit Holdings Inc president Lance Y. Gokongwei; Robinsons Malls general manager Nilo S. Mapa Jr.; CMC plant manager Gerry M. Magadia; URC Flour marketing services manager Kismet I. Uy and Robinsons Land Corporate PR manager Roseann C. Villegas.

BOY PIANIST SHINES IN SEOUL

A Filipino 12-year-old boy, Franco Lorenzo Fajardo Liwanag, became a celebrated pianist in Korea during the Memorial Concert held on Oct. 16 for the 106th birthday of Dr. Shinichi Suzuki, the founder of the Suzuki music method. Franco was the sole Philippine representative in this important memorial concert. He was selected by his mentor, professor Carmencita Guanzon-Arambulo (left) of University of the Philippines and directress of the Greenhills Music Studio, as well as president of the Philippine Suzuki Association; and by Hkung-Ik Hwang, president of the Asia Suzuki Association.

KEPPEL CEBU SHIPYARD IS A CENTENARIAN

Toasting to the posterity and prosperity of Keppel Cebu Shipyard are (from left): Choo Chiau Beng, chair and CEO of Keppel Offshore & Marine Ltd; Lim Chee Onn, executive chair of Keppel Corp; Erramon Aboitiz, chief operating officer, Aboitiz Equity Ventures; Charles Foo, chair, Keppel Philippine Marine Inc; lawyer Augusto Go, president, University of Cebu; Dr. Ishmael Limkahkeng Jr.; Toh Ko Lin, president, Keppel Philippine Marine Inc.

ProductFILES

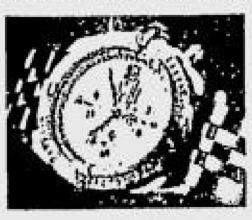
Holiday feast at Serye

BITE into home-style Filipino delights at Serye Restaurant and Café. Enjoy their smokin' good Chicken Barbeque - the specialty of the house, or appetizing Embutido - a fiesta favorite. Follow up with Leche Flan a la Serye - our top dessert offering. Enjoy these and many other dishes, in big servings, only at Serye Restaurant and Café. For deliveries, call 924-3411/426-2693 (QC Branch) or 825-4691/826-9317 (Sucat Branch).

A chocolatey Christmas

SHOW your loved ones how much you care by giving them irresistible chocolate treats. The all new Belgian Bites are balls of soft, moist chocolate dough, filled with creamy Belgian Chocolate, wrapped in premium milk chocolate and coated with your favorite toppings. It's a perfect holiday treat that comes in an elegant gold Christmas box complete with Christmas card ready to be given away. With Mister Donut Belgian Bites, you're sure to have a very merry Christmas.

The Chronomat Evolution



LAUNCHED twenty years ago against the trends of the period, the Breitling's Chronomat heralded the renaissance of the mechanical chronograph. Breitling now presents Chronomat Evolution, the new version of the model. This restyling represented a significant challenge for Breitling designers. The result is an opulent, sophisticated chronograph featuring a perfect blend of proportions and curves, while remaining dedicated to its vocation as an "instrument of professionals". Sturdiness, precision and functionality are inherent on Breitling's long tradition of making excellent timepieces.

'MUSIC OF MY MIND' BOOK LAUNCH

Shown are Macario Gaw Jr. and Karen Gaw, proud parents of Katrina Monica Chen Gaw (center), author of the book, 'Music of My Mind' recently launched at the lounge of The Podium. Others in photo are Andrew Tan, chair of Megaworld Corp and Ric Lim, PR Consultant.

NYC NAMES YOUNG YNARES OUTSTANDING YOUTH

Laguna Lake Development Authority General Manager Dr. Jun Ynares III was named outstanding youth by the National Youth Commission at the recently held Annual National Youth Day in Cebu City. Ynares, 31, was appointed by President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo at the Laguna Lake Development Authority, thus making him the youngest top executive of the lake agency since it was created. Co-organized by the Department of Education and the Kabataang Samasamang Magilingkod (Kasama), this year's National Youth Day has a theme 'In Search for Filipino Youth Identity.' A physician by profession, Ynares was cited for steering the LLDA into financial stability, as the lake agency was among the very few government entities that has shown steadiness insofar as finances is concerned---reaching this year's target revenue of P95.55 million as early as October, sharing revenue to lakeshore localities, posting significant savings for the lake agency as per instruction of President Arroyo in her call for austerity, among others. GM Ynares is the son of Rizal governor Casimiro M. Ynares Jr.

TRI-WORLD SPONSORS WEEK FOR THE GIFTED

Tri- World International, makers of high-class quality pianos, sponsors Wyeth Philippines, Inc.'s celebration of the National Week for the Gifted this year, a countrywide long-week celebration of gifted and talented Filipino children as part of the country's support for these extraordinary individuals. Shown in photo during the National Week for the Gifted's culminating event in Le Souffle Fort Bonifacio are gifted child saxophonist Jacob Sarreal, Asia's Songbird Regine Velasquez and gifted child pianist Bryan Sapigao. Beside Bryan Sapigao is a Yamaha Baby Grand Piano from The Piano Centre or Tri-World International. Tri-World International has showrooms located in the different parts of Metro Manila. For more details, you may call 920-7239, 373-3657 or 372-1145.

Motorola opens its 1st concept store - The Motostation

MOTOROLA plays it hip, fun and vibrant as it opens its first concept store in the country at the Digital Exchange located at 3rd Level of Glorietta 3 of Ayala Center, Makati City.

The grand opening was highlighted by a ceremonial ribbon cutting led by Rod Nepumoceno, corporate director of MTV Philippines, Edwin Tan, president of Memo Express and Arlene Aran Amarante, PCS country manager of Motorola Communications Philippines Inc.

"Motorola has signified its comeback in the Philippine market and the concept store at the Digital Exchange is a symbolic sign that we are here for the long haul. The store that carries a global look was designed to look young and hip to symbolize Motorola's change in strategic outlook. We are a young and fun brand that offers innovation and technology," said Arlene Aran Amarante as she offered a toast to the guests.

For more than 75 years, Motorola, the US-based electronics giant, has proven itself a global leader in wireless, broadband and automotive communications technologies and embedded electronic products, and has become a company recognized for its dedication to ethical business practices and pioneering role in important innovations.

"With this digital hub, Motorola and Memmo Express move forward and commit themselves of providing a complete range of Motorola handsets and accessories. Future products are highlighted to give the consumers a flavor of future technologies," Amarante continued.

According to Edwin Tan, the store proprietor, people can expect this Motorola flagship store to be among the first to carry the latest in Motorola. "If you want to know the latest in mobile phones and accessories and its advancing technologies, give us a visit."

Neutrogena

J&J ADVOCATES PDS' SKINHELP

Johnson and Johnson (J&J) Philippines, through its line of skincare products such as Neutrogena, joined the 28th Annual Philippine Dermatological Society (PDS) Convention held recently at Edsa Shangri-La Hotel in Mandaluyong City. During the event, PDS and J&J commemorated the conclusion of Skinhelp (Skin, Hair and Nail Health Education Program), a public education and information campaign that toured various schools and health centers. For each outreach site, PDS Members gave a lecture and answered questions on proper care for the skin, hair, and nails, as well as on common skin problems and infections. PDS' Skinhelp is made possible through an educational grant from J&J. Part of this grant was also allocated for funding Skinhelp educational materials prepared by PDS which were disseminated to the public during Skinhelp's activities. Photo shows J&J senior professional marketing manager Allan Ancheta, J&J professional marketing executive Cristy Ann Villablanca-Deocareza, with representatives from the PDS-Skinhelp Ad Hoc Committee Dr. Jasmin T. Que (chair) and Dr. Tinky Nograles.

CHINA EASTERN
東航假期
CHINA EASTERN HOLIDAY
ORIENTATION TOUR

CHINA EASTERN HOLIDAY ORIENTATION TOUR

Manila Travel Agency Association (MTAA) delegation headed by the officially designated representative of Mayor Lito Atienza of Manila - Melissa Cayco, recently visited the cities of Quanzhou, Jinjiang and Shishi. The visit of the group of professional travel agents/members was sponsored by Quanzhou Department of Tourism and the China Eastern Airline. Shown in photo are chief delegate Melissa Cayco (10th on the right) and Anthony Que president of MTAA together with its entourage.

UST study confirms comfort in Burlington Shock XT

IN A time when athletes are stronger and comfort is a necessity for better performance, Burlington Shock XT fulfills that need.

Burlington Shock XT's efficiency in providing comfort to its wearer has been affirmed by researchers from the University of Santo Tomas College of Rehabilitation Sciences and College of Sports Sciences.

The pilot survey was done in mid-August to a group of UST Sports Science students, both boys and girls, who were divided into groups of sedentary and fit persons. Blindfolded, the subjects performed three trials of vertical jump and 20-meter sprint using ordinary socks first before the Burlington Shock XT.

In both the vertical jump and the 20-meter sprint tests, Sports Science chair Joy Reyes and Rehab Sciences College secretary Michael Peralta confirmed that Burlington Shock XT socks provided better comfort to the fit subjects than the ordinary socks. This is because of Burlington Shock XT's extra paddings which are scientifically designed to cushion the pressure of active movements.

"Kung comfort lang ang pag-uusapan, talagang mas masarap isuot yung Burlington XT compared to ordinary ones," said Reyes.

Reyes added the Burlington Shock XT's performance can be better ascertained in activities that involve a lot of footwork. She said the effect on the wearer's performance would likely become more evident on court-running sports and marathon, to name a few.

"We also like to determine how long the comfort would last to the sock's wearer. Preferably we'd like to test it to marathoners the next time," Peralta said.

Burlington Shock XT is a revolutionary product designed to strategically provide protection for the feet where it is needed most. It comes in three specific designs made especially for sports that involve a lot of jumping and running.

The kitchen wiz behind Café Nuevé

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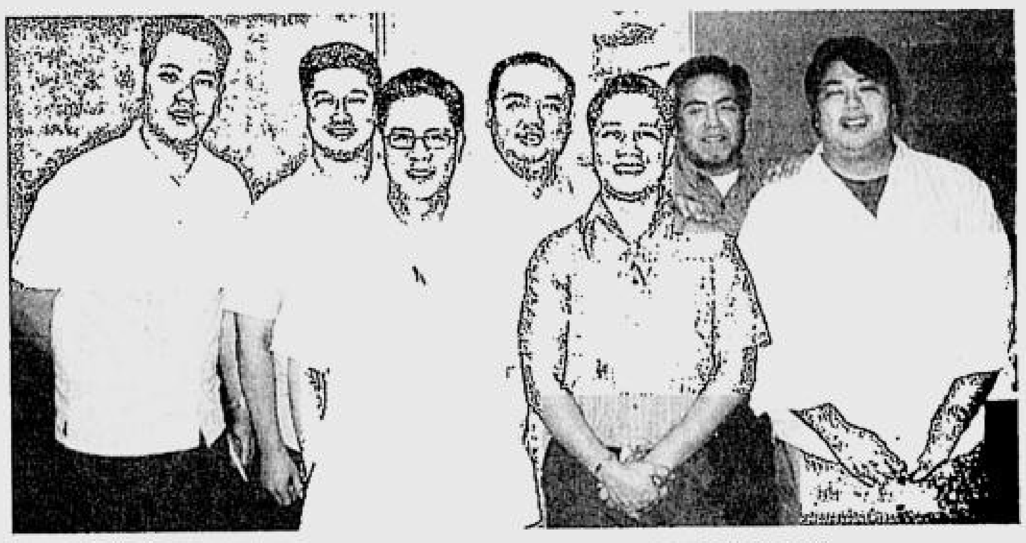

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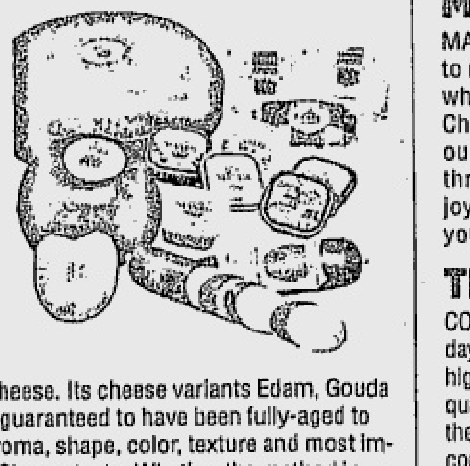
Product FILES



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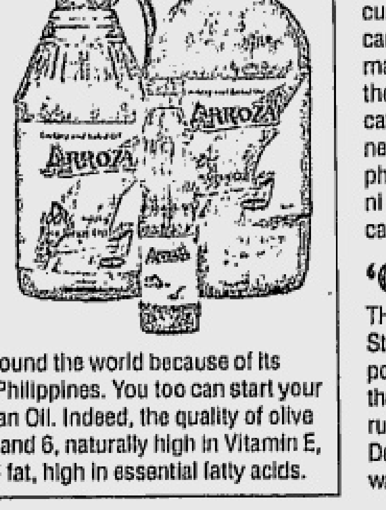
The quality of olive oil but less expensive



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Bits & Clips

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MasterCard

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Motorola opens its 1st concept store - The Motostation

MOTOROLA plays it hip, fun and vibrant as it opens its first concept store in the country at the Digital Exchange located at 3rd Level of Glorietta 3 of Ayala Center, Makati City.

The grand opening was highlighted by a ceremonial ribbon cutting led by Rod Nepumoceno, corporate director of MTV Philippines, Edwin Tan, president of Memo Express and Arlene Aran Amarante, PCS country manager of Motorola Communications Philippines Inc.

"Motorola has signified its comeback in the Philippine market and the concept store at the Digital Exchange is a symbolic sign that we are here for the long haul. The store that carries a global look was designed to look young and hip to symbolize Motorola's change in strategic outlook. We are a young and fun brand that offers innovation and technology," said Arlene Aran Amarante as she offered a toast to the guests.

For more than 75 years, Motorola, the US-based electronics giant, has proven itself a global leader in wireless, broadband and automotive communications technologies and embedded electronic products, and has become a company recognized for its dedication to ethical business practices and pioneering role in important innovations.

"With this digital hub, Motorola and Memmo Express move forward and commit themselves of providing a complete range of Motorola handsets and accessories. Future products are highlighted to give the consumers a flavor of future technologies," Amarante continued.

According to Edwin Tan, the store proprietor, people can expect this Motorola flagship store to be among the first to carry the latest in Motorola. "If you want to know the latest in mobile phones and accessories and its advancing technologies, give us a visit."

Neutrogena

J&J ADVOCATES PDS' SKINHELP
Johnson and Johnson (J&J) Philippines, through its line of skincare products such as Neutrogena, joined the 28th Annual Philippine Dermatological Society (PDS) Convention held recently at Edsa Shangri-La Hotel in Mandaluyong City. During the event, PDS and J&J commemorated the conclusion of Skinhelp (Skin, Hair and Nail Health Education Program), a public education and information campaign that toured various schools and health centers. For each outreach site, PDS Members gave a lecture and answered questions on proper care for the skin, hair, and nails, as well as on common skin problems and infections. PDS' Skinhelp is made possible through an educational grant from J&J. Part of this grant was also allocated for funding Skinhelp educational materials prepared by PDS which were disseminated to the public during Skinhelp's activities. Photo shows J&J senior professional marketing manager Allan Ancheta, J&J professional marketing executive Cristy Ann Villablanca-Deocareza, with representatives from the PDS-Skinhelp Ad Hoc Committee Dr. Jasmin T. Que (chair) and Dr. Tinky Nograles.

東航假期
CHINA EASTERN HOLIDAY
ORIENTATION TOUR
CHINA EASTERN

CHINA EASTERN HOLIDAY ORIENTATION TOUR
Manila Travel Agency Association (MTAA) delegation headed by the officially designated representative of Mayor Lito Atienza of Manila - Melissa Cayco, recently visited the cities of Quanzhou, Jinjiang and Shishi. The visit of the group of professional travel agents/members was sponsored by Quanzhou Department of Tourism and the China Eastern Airline. Shown in photo are chief delegate Melissa Cayco (10th on the right) and Anthony Que president of MTAA together with its entourage.

UST study confirms comfort in Burlington Shock XT

IN A time when athletes are stronger and comfort is a necessity for better performance, Burlington Shock XT fulfills that need.

Burlington Shock XT's efficiency in providing comfort to its wearer has been affirmed by researchers from the University of Santo Tomas College of Rehabilitation Sciences and College of Sports Sciences.

The pilot survey was done in mid-August to a group of UST Sports Science students, both boys and girls, who were divided into groups of sedentary and fit persons. Blindfolded, the subjects performed three trials of vertical jump and 20-meter sprint using ordinary socks first before the Burlington Shock XT.

In both the vertical jump and the 20-meter sprint tests, Sports Science chair Joy Reyes and Rehab Sciences College secretary Michael Peralta confirmed that Burlington Shock XT socks provided better comfort to the fit subjects than the ordinary socks. This is because of Burlington Shock XT's extra paddings which are scientifically designed to cushion the pressure of active movements.

"Kung comfort lang ang pag-uusapan, talagang mas masarap isuot yung Burlington XT compared to ordinary ones," said Reyes.

Reyes added the Burlington Shock XT's performance can be better ascertained in activities that involve a lot of footwork. She said the effect on the wearer's performance would likely become more evident on court-running sports and marathon, to name a few.

"We also like to determine how long the comfort would last to the sock's wearer. Preferably we'd like to test it to marathoners the next time," Peralta said.

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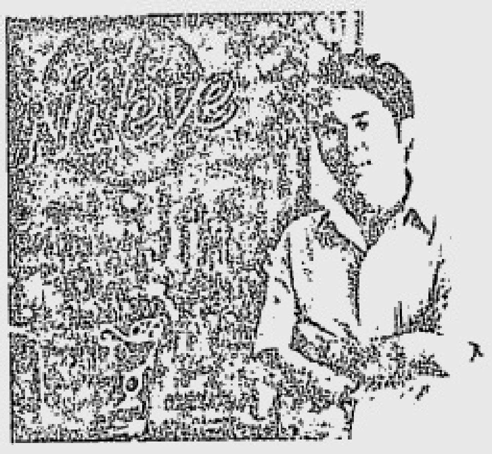

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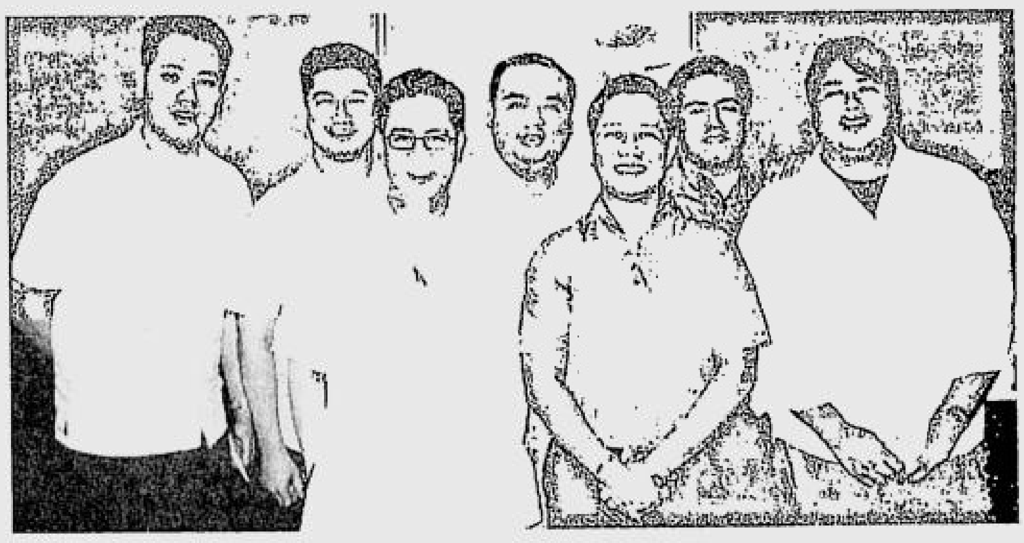

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ProductFILES

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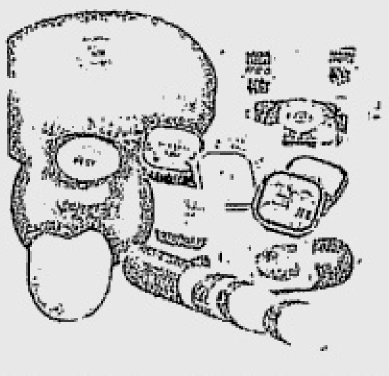

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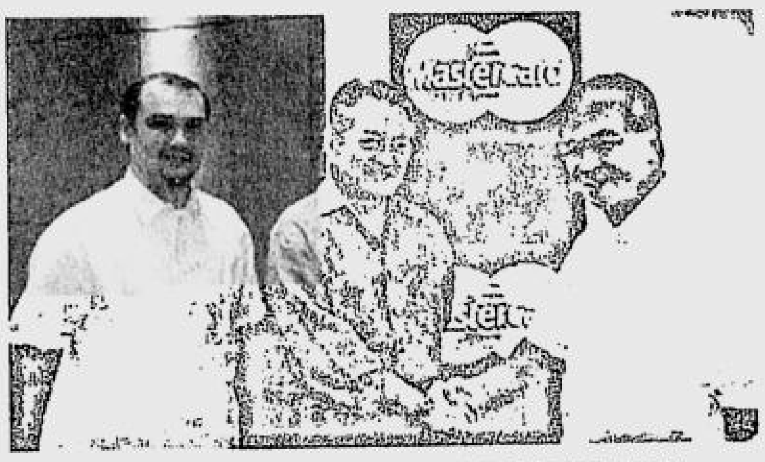

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OFWs urged to send dollars via banks

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas is mapping out a comprehensive program to encourage overseas Filipino workers to course their remittances through formal channels and help perk up the economy by investing in small and medium enterprises.

In view of an Asian Development Bank study, which indicated that inflows from OFWs were hardly contributing to production growth, BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the BSP had proposed to Malacañang the creation of an inter-agency committee to push for specific programs for OFWs.

"Remittances can play a major role in supporting the generation of enterprises, particularly in the micro and small- and medium-scale levels," Tetangco said in a paper delivered during an ADB forum on OFW remittances.

He said the BSP was working with various government agencies and private sector groups to look into the issue of OFW remittances and how best to capture and harness them.

Tetangco said the BSP was also hatching a comprehensive financial literacy program intended to improve the public's ability to better understand financial information and critically address the products and services offered by banks.

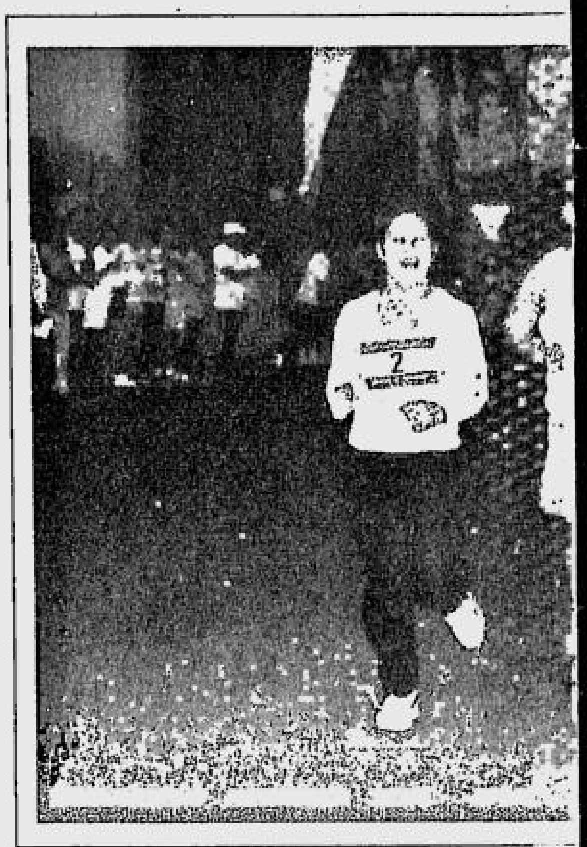
"The BSP has identified a number of projects including information dissemination on consumer rights and responsibilities, banking products and services, primer on frequently used financial terms, and savings campaign," Tetangco said.

"The growth of small-scale businesses is likewise being encouraged by the BSP through its promotion of micro finance-based institutions," he said.

To fully take advantage of this developmental role, Tetangco said it was important to have a stable macroeconomic environment that would support the growth of investments. On a more micro level, he said there was a need to enhance programs for recipients of remittances to encourage them to engage in productive activities.

Throughout the years, the Philippines has been relying on huge remittances from OFWs to boost domestic consumer demand. In 2003, OFWs pumped in $7.64 billion to the domestic economy. This year, the inflows are expected to reach $8.4 billion and are seen to further grow to $9 billion next year.

But Tetangco admitted that convincing OFWs to course their remittances through formal channels was a challenge to the banking system and the government.



Gov't awards Masinloc plant to YNN Pacific

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT formally awarded the Masinloc coal-fired power plant deal yesterday to the winning bidder, the YNN Pacific Consortium, shrugging off moves in Congress to subject the bidding process to an investigation because of the group's "doubtful" financial capability.

Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong, who is also chair of state-owned National Power Corp., said the notice of award of the 600-megawatt Masinloc , one of Napocor's biggest assets, was given yesterday to the YNN Consortium.

Amatong said she could not see why a move in Congress to investigate the bidding process for Masinloc should hamper the sale of the power plant. She said legislators could proceed with their investigation "in aid of legislation" without causing delays in the sale of the Zambales-based power plant.

"There are questions from legislators on the capitalization of the winning bidder. But if they (YNN Consortium) can really give 40 percent (down payment), then it will show that they are really very serious in their bid," Amatong said in a press briefing.

YNN Consortium won the bidding of the 600-megawatt Masinloc after offering the highest bid of $561 million. Of the amount, the firm is required to pay 40-percent down payment. But Amatong said Napocor would collect the down payment as soon as the government and YNN Consortium finish with the documentation procedures of the sale.

Critics say the government should not immediately pursue with the sale of Masinloc to YNN Consortium, casting doubts on the financial capabilities of the little-known firm based in Australia.

In Congress, party-list congressmen led by Bayan Muna Rep. Teodoro Casiño filed House Bill No. 468, which calls for an investigation of the bidding of Masinloc held last Dec. 3. The legislators called for the investigation in the belief there could be irregularities in the bidding process that allowed YNN Consortium to win.

But the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM), which handles the privatization of Napocor's assets, said the government will only be at the losing end if it cancels the sale of Masinloc because doing so would prevent it from drawing on the $9-million security bond.

Local firms post $80M in sales in China-Asean fair

By Ronnel W. Domingo

LOCAL firms registered $80 million or about P4.5 billion in sales mainly of mangoes and other food products during the first China-Asean Expo held last month in Nanning City in China's Guanxi province.

Liu Qibao, vice chair of the Guangxi preparation committee for the event, said the CAExpo was started as a means of facilitating the establishment of a China-Asean free trade area, which is expected to be realized by 2010.

Liu, who is leading a Guangxi mission to the country, said the exhibitors posted a total of $1.08 billion in sales, of which the Philippines' share was the fourth largest.

The official explained that, concurrent with the trade show, there were 26 investment project promotion seminars and three project cooperation signing rites involving at least $11 billion in contractual funds.

He added that the CAExpo, which Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao initiated, hosted 8,000 exhibitors and 350,000 visitors.

"There were 11 sectors with 210 kinds of products showcased in the exhibition," Liu said. "Those who joined included 19 enterprises out of the Fortune Global 500 companies as well as 61 firms listed in mainland (stock markets)."

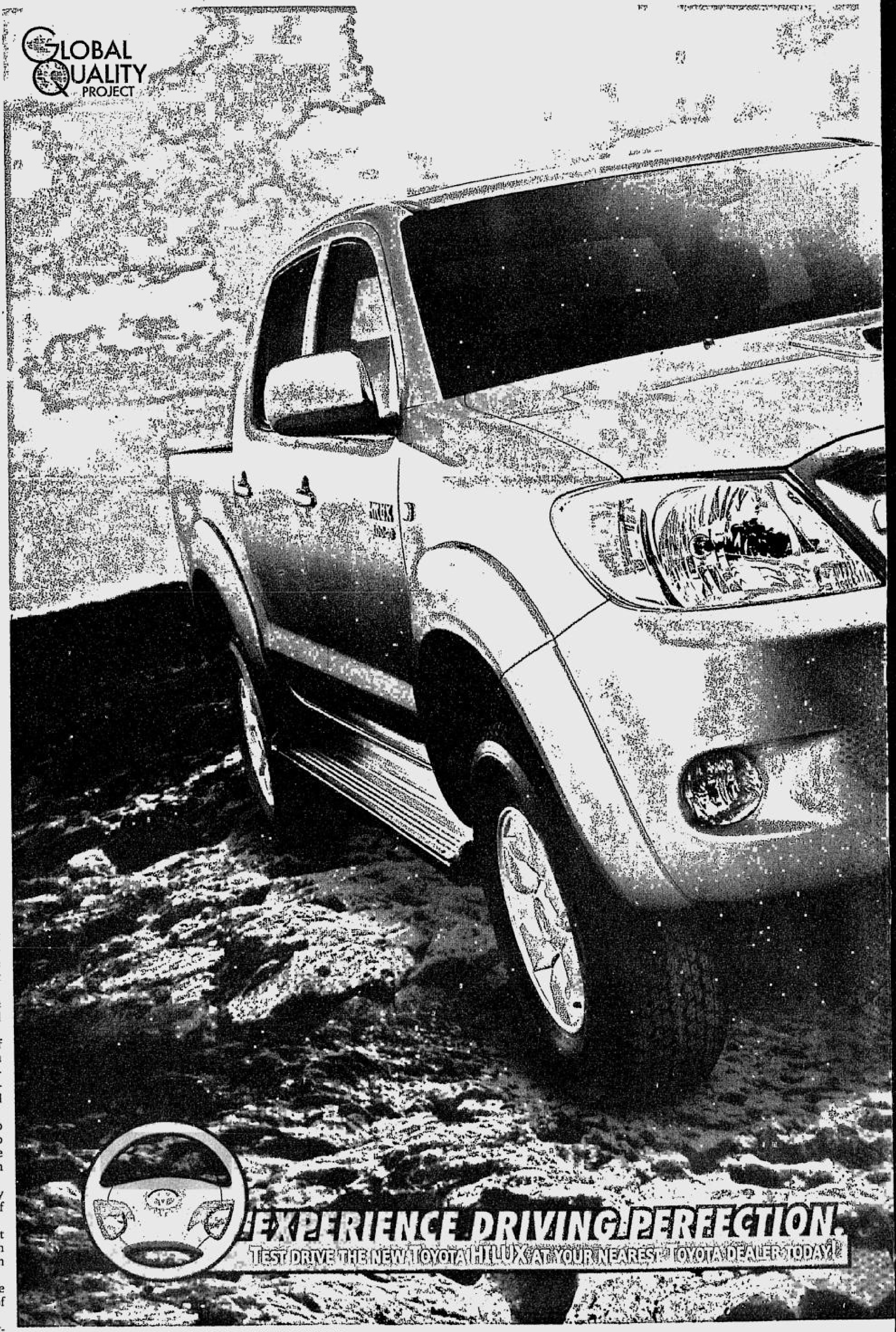
Trade Undersecretary Thomas G. Aquino said the Philippines' participation in the expo showed the country's commitment to the strengthening of relations between the Asean and China.

Liu said the CAExpo would be held yearly every November in Nanning City, capital of the Chinese province nearest Southeast Asia.

"The success of the first expo proves that China and Asean are complementary to each other and that one side can't be prosperous in absence of the other," he said.

He added that the next expo would more than double the first's exhibit area to a total of 106,000 square meters.

There were 14 Philippine firms that participated in last month's trade show, including Oceanic Exports (Manila) Inc., AAMC Foods Corp., El Coco Manufacturing Inc., Mabuhay 2000, Superstar Coconut, Camel Appliances Manufacturing Corp., Euro-Med Laboratories Inc., Philippine Coco Forest, Viviendo Philippines Inc., Club Panoly Resort, Morning Star Travel and Tours Inc., DOT Travel Service Philippines Inc., Jeron Travel and Tours and Philippine Airlines.



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BULL RUN Former President Fidel V. Ramos, Alicia Rita Arroyo, PSE chair and Francis Lim, PSE president, lead a pack of runners during the "bull run" of the Philippine Stock Exchange at the Bonifacio Global City. Top officials of brokerage firms, corporations, government agencies and the academe took part in the annual event.

NFA PROSPECTS DIM

Higher rice prices loom in '05

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE NATIONAL Food Authority may have to increase its retail price of regular and premium rice by P3 per kilo if the national government fails to fully subsidize the anticipated spike in the price of imports next year.

The average price of ordinary and well-milled rice, pegged at P16 and P18, respectively, may go up to P19 and P21 per kilo.

The state-run agency may not be able to shoulder all the added costs that will accompany the country's rice imports this coming January, NFA Administrator Gregorio Tan said.

"An increase may be unavoidable," Tan said during an interview. "It will actually depend on the DBM (Department of Budget and Management) because we could not carry all these costs."

The state-owned trading firm is expecting additional losses of P2.1 billion if the DBM does not come to their aid, Tan said.

The NFA is one of the government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs) that is trying to cut its financial losses beginning this year.

However, the recent typhoons pared down the country's potential rice harvests.

According to government officials, there is now a need to buy rice from the international market as early as January to prevent supply shortages next year. Already, they said, the summer rice harvests had been delayed.

"The successive typhoons had a negative impact on the country's palay cropping and planting next year," Tan said.

Also, officials expect the harvests to be delayed due to the occurrence of the El Niño weather disturbance.

Tan admitted that the tight rice supply situation in the world market would likely affect the country's imports temporarily pegged at 900,000 metric tons.

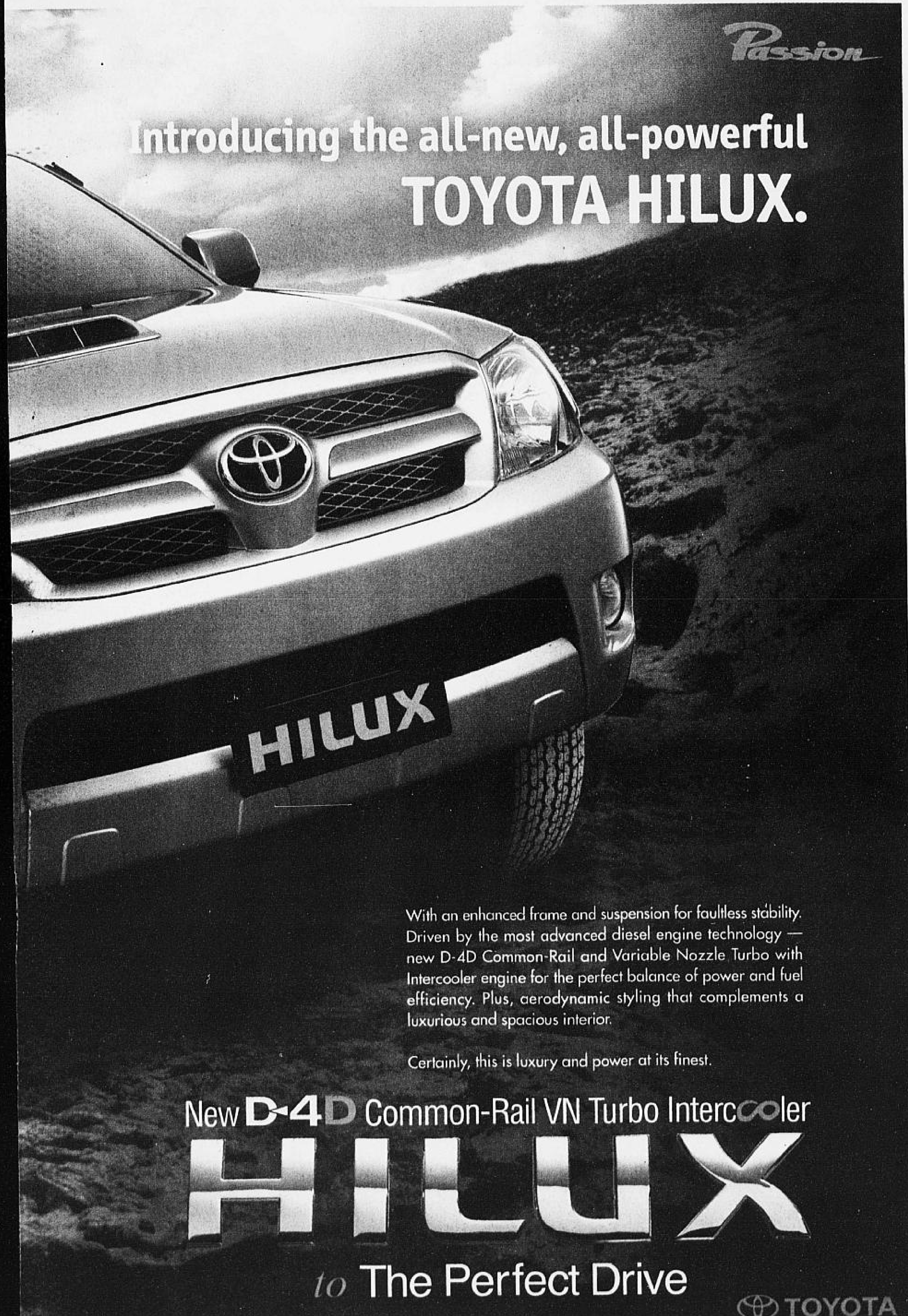
The current average at the international rice market is now between $320 to $350 per metric ton as leading exporters such as China are also keeping additional rice supplies for their growing demand.

The Philippines, one of Asia's largest rice importers, bought a total of 985,000 metric tons this year.

The NFA shipped in the grain at the cost of P13 billion.

The imported rice would boost the country's rice inventory for 2004.

Officials said the Philippines usually would import the bulk of its rice requirement in the second quarter of each year for use in the third quarter, the lean season for local harvests.



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Hybrid rice maker sees 50% rise in sales

BIGANTE hybrid rice seed producer Bayer Cropscience Phils. sees a 50-percent increase in its sales next year to 1,450 metric tons from the present 900-metric ton volume.

Bayer Cropscience, a major rice seed producer, noted that more and more farmers had turned to the high-yielding rice variety.

Company officials said that the sale this year of some 900 metric tons of its Bigante hybrid rice variety was 100 percent higher than the 450 metric tons sold in 2003.

Carlos Miguel L. Saplala, Bayer Cropscience country manager, came up with the projection even as he anticipated difficulties in next year's cropping season.

"The commercial hybrid rice seed production is an emerging business and, inasmuch as we are the second biggest producer of hybrid rice seeds, we would like to take advantage of the increasing farmers' interest in using high yield varieties," Saplala said in a recent interview.

The Department of Agriculture hopes to use the high-yielding rice seeds in 600,000 hectares of farmland for the crop year 2004-2005.

The hybrid seeds are the only variety in the market that is resistant to bacterial leaf blight.

But Saplala warned of the long-term effect of the continued government subsidy in the procurement and distribution of hybrid rice seeds to farmers.

Bayer Cropscience sells Bigante seeds directly to farmers and does not participate in the government's procurement scheme involving other commercial hybrid rice seed growers.

The Department of Agriculture's recent policy to subsidize the marketing of 20-kilogram hybrid rice seeds at P650 from the P1,200 per 20-kilogam sack has actually distorted prices, Saplala said.

"There is really a distorted price [mechanism] and farmers would choose the P650 per hectare cost against our P1,900 (for the 15-kilogram sack)," he said. "That does not give us a good position in the market as it would seem we are overpricing, when, in fact, government is just lowering farmers'costs because of the subsidy."

Christine A. Gaylican

Subic auctioneer to export used SUVs to Sudan

By Ronnel W. Domingo

SUBIC Bay Motors Corp., auction firm dealing in used vehicles, has started exporting pre-owned but re-manufactured sports utility vehicles and pickups with an initial batch of 20 units to Sudan in Africa.

Ben Perez, general manager of the auction firm based at the Subic Freeport, said that they had secured an order for the first shipment from Ranhill Engineers and Contractors Sdn. Bhd., a Malaysian engineering firm engaged in oil and gas, power, water and infrastructure development.

Perez said in a statement that the order came through after six months of intensive international marketing campaign.

He said Ranhill placed an initial order of 14 units of Isuzu Bighorn and six units of Mitsubishi pickups for export to Petrodar Operating Co. Ltd., the Malaysian firm's affiliate in the northeast African state.

"Through the efforts of SBMC's partner Komei Toya of Azumaya Tohin Seisakusho Co. Ltd.—which is based in Nagoya, Japan—prospects for export to other countries like the United Arab Emirates, Iran, Afghanistan and Iraq are now within reach," Perez said.

He added that the SBMC was also in the final stage of negotiations with Bitumart International Asia Co. Ltd of Thailand to supply 20 units of Toyota Hi-lux pickups, 12 units of Isuzu 10-wheel tractor heads and 12 units of low-bed and high-bed trailers.

Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority Administrator Alfredo C. Antonio said SMBC's foray in the global market would further develop the expertise of Filipino mechanics and auto-industry workers in producing export quality vehicles.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

ANNOUNCEMENT

ANNOUNCEMENT
The Philippine Association of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgeons Inc. (PATACSI) announces that the ATCSA Car Raffle 2004 on Dec. 22, 2004 will be be postponed. New Draw Date will be on July 30, 2004.

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LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late LUIS & BELLA LAREZA has been extrajudicially settled among the heirs under Doc. No. 70, Page No. 15, Book No. 157, Series of 2004 in the Notarial Registry of Atty. Gerardo R. Floros, Mandaluyong City.
(PDI-Dec. 9, 16 & 23, 2004)

PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late NORBERTO E. ABOBON has been extrajudicially settled with an affidavit of self adjudication by his heirs as per docs 89 & 90 ; page 18; book3 ; Series of 2004 before Notary Public Atty. Jocelyn A. Ratulta (PDI -December 23, 30 ' 2004 & January 6 2005)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late ELIAS O. VERDADERO who died on July 11, 1990 at Piscataway, New Jersey, USA has been extrajudicially settled with partition and with Affidavit of Adjudication and waiver of right among his heirs per Doc. No. 009128 Series of 2004 under the seal of the Consulate General of the Philippines, New York, USA Ms Maria Lourdes C. Legaspi.
(PDI-Dec. 9, 16 & 23, 2004)

ANNOUNCEMENT

NOTICE OF CANCELLATION
UPON Deed of Cancellation made and entered into this Aug 18 1987 by KABUL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION and AUREA DE JESUS-SANTOS to cancel the Land Purchase Agreement dated March 14, 1970 over Lot No. 8 Block No. 11 of Pecsonville Subdivision, Tungkong Mangga, San Jose Del Monte City, as acknowledged by Notary Public Atty. Jose V Navarra Doc. No. 623 Page No 84, Book No. XXVII, Series of 1987. Notice to the interested parties and to the public is hereby served pursuant to its rights granted by R.A. 6552.
Quezon City Philippines
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PROVINCE OF BUKIDNON
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BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
Provincial Governor's Office

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) of the Province of Bukidnon, invites interested Suppliers, Distributors and Manufacturers to apply for eligibility and to bid on the following projects:

NAME OF PROJECTS	APPROVED BUDGET OF THE CONTRACT	SOURCE OF FUND
I. DRUGS & MEDICINES	P 30,666,976.35	General Fund & Capitation
II. MEDICAL AND LAB. SUPPLIES AND REAGENTS	P 8,829,410.90	General Fund & Capitation
III. MEDICAL AND LABORATORY EQUIPMENT	P 3,504,363.00	Trust Fund

This is for the use of Seven (7) Provincial Hospitals and twenty-two (22) Provincial Health Stations of the Province of Bukidnon. Immediate delivery or a maximum of fifteen (15) working days upon receipt of the purchase order is strictly required. Goods will be delivered at the Provincial General Services Office, Capitol Compound, Malaybalay City.

Schedule of activities are as follows:

1. December 20-29, 2004 – Issuance of eligibility requirements and bid documents (for accredited supplier)
2. December 21, 2004 – Pre-bid conference (BAC office)
3. January 3, 2005 – 9:00 a.m. Deadline for submission of Eligibility requirements
4. January 6, 2005 – 9:00 a.m. Deadline for the submission of bids
5. January 6, 2005 – 10:00 a.m. Opening of bids in sealed envelope

Only responsible and interested suppliers are qualified to participate upon presentation of the following:

1. Business Registration – DTI/SEC
2. VAT/BIR Tax clearance certificate
3. Mayor's permit
4. License to operate issued by BFAD
5. CPR/BFAD certificate for Product requiring certificate
6. Certificate of distributorship
7. List of products
8. Company's pharmacy license
9. Accomplished track record
10. Sworn statement of disclosure of relations
11. Supplier's audited financial statement
12. NFCC's computation or commitment from a licensed bank or cash deposit of at least equal to 10% of the ABC of the contract to bid.
13. Statement of prospective bidder that they are not Blacklisted or barred from bidding by the Gov't or any of its offices.
14. Special power of attorney issued by authorized company official with authority to transact business and sign in behalf of the owner.

Complete sets of eligibility requirements and bid documents may be obtained at the BAC Secretariat at the Provincial General Services Office, Province of Bukidnon, upon payment of non-refundable fee of P500.00/set. Duly accomplished eligibility requirements and bid documents shall be submitted in sealed envelope addressed to BAC chairman c/o BAC Secretariat.

The provision of R.A. 9184 and its implementing rules and regulations, shall govern all particulars relative to eligibility, bid bond, performance bond, pre-bid conference, bid evaluation and award of contract.

The BAC of the Province of Bukidnon reserves the right to accept or reject all bids thereof, to waive formality therein or to accept such bids or to award any work that is considered most advantageous to the Province of Bukidnon

For any inquiry, please feel free to call the BAC secretariat at telephone number 088-813-25-37.

(Sgd.) MR. JOSEFREDIE F. FLORES
BAC Chairman/ Provincial Administrator

(PDI–Dec. 16 & 23, 2004)

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NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the application of CHENSHIN CORPORATION with address at Ngilay Road, Tambler, General Santos City for registration with the Board of Investments under Book I of the Omnibus Investments Code of 1987, otherwise known as E.O. 226, as Amended, as New Export Producer of Smoked Fish at a capacity of Four Hundred (400) Metric Tons per year on a Non-Pioneer Status, has been officially accepted on October 26, 2004, and is currently being processed.

Any person with valid objections to or pertinent comments on the above-mentioned application may file his/her objection, in writing and under oath, with the BOI within one (1) week from the date of this publication.

(Sgd.) RUDY B. CAÑA
Officer-in-Charge
Project Evaluation and Registration Department

(PDI – Dec. 23, 2004)

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URGENT: LAWYER
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Call Center Dynamics

ASPIRE IT Solutions, a provider of comprehensive IT solutions for the global community in partnership with Profiles Asia Pacific, a world-class leader in Internet and computer-based testing for call center, office, industrial and professional skills, announces the formation of **Call Center Dynamics** (CCD) a business unit setup to apply its own unique brand of Internet and assessments-based recruitment services to the Call Center industry.

"The cost of high turnover coupled with the low acceptance rate of applicants is the number one problem affecting efficiency and profitability of a modern call center," says Noel Garcia, managing director of Manila-based Aspire IT Solutions. "Very few candidates tested meet the experience, abilities and behaviors to do the work. This impacts the ability to hire agents that meet the job requirements".

CCD uses the new multimedia simulations of SkillCheck's Customer Service and Sales Scenarios assessments to allow center managers and operators to determine if someone has the skills to succeed before they are hired. "These Call Center testing products have helped call centers reduce their turnover to fewer than 8 percent," continues Noel Garcia.

The Customer Service Scenarios place a candidate in a real-world customer service situation and requires him or her to respond to incoming questions and complaints by simulated callers. Each response the candidate makes will continue the conversation in a different direction, with an assessment of a candidate's manners, effectiveness, and efficiency being made with each and every response.

The Customer Service Scenarios test is adaptive, meaning that if a candidate performs well on a call, they will be presented with a more difficult call next. If they do not perform as well, they will be presented with a less difficult situation. "Using this unique adaptive methodology, test administrators can zero in on a candidate's capabilities in the shortest amount of time," says Noel Garcia.

Our Sales Scenarios test require a candidate to interact with contacts and prospects at various stages of the sales cycle, from prospecting and information gathering/controlling the sale, to handling objections and closing.

At the end of each Call Center Scenarios test, a test administrator is provided with a detailed report, describing overall performance and performance on all relevant scales (Manners, Effectiveness, Accuracy, Evaluation and Follow Up for Customer Service and Prospecting, Information Gathering/ Controlling the Sale, Handling Objections and Closing for Sales).

Our Call Center Test package includes these powerful assessments, as well as assessments covering a broad range of additional call center skills, including data entry from audio input, data analysis (including referencing and cross-referencing information), telephone and spelling skills to the more advanced technical and IT skills needed for call centers.

To find our more about **Call Center Dynamics** call Tel +63 2 6700-8525 or visit the website at www. AspireIT.com.

POEA
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DOT wins Statistical Forum Award

THE DEPARTMENT of Tourism was awarded the Best Statistical Forum for its "Workshop on Tourism Statistics" during the 9th National Convention on Statistics held recently at the EDSA Shangri-La Hotel in Mandaluyong City as part of the celebration of the 15th National Statistics Month.

The "Workshop on Tourism Statistics" was organized and conducted by the DOT at the Marriott Hotel in Cebu City as part of last year's 14th National Statistics Month celebration. There were more than 200 participants, mostly from local government units and regional offices of national government agencies nationwide.

According to Undersecretary Evelyn B. Pantig, DOT's Officer-in-Charge, the award came as a surprise considering that other entries came from formidable agencies like the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas with its entry "2003 BSP's User Forum on BSP-Produced Statistics" and the National Statistical Office with its two entries "Poverty Measurement Workshop" and "Statistical Data Appreciation Workshop."

The workshop was convened to provide a venue for informing, educating and mobilizing actions for sustainable tourism development through the generation and compilation of regular and updated data ,' information on the local tourism industry. It also provided an opportunity to advocate among participating agencies their responsibilities in generating statistics to support domestic tourism at the national and local levels.

Its objectives included the identification of domestic tourists and determination of data needed, methodology, data availability and gaps in data collection as well as on the assessment of data generation capability, development of action plan to generate data required and the establishment of commitment for regular and timely generation of domestic tourism statistics.

A series of meetings to evaluate and select these winners was conducted by the 14th NSM Awards Committee, which was composed of the NEDA, BSP, DOT, Philippine Information Agency, University of Santo Tomas, Statistical Research and Training Center, and the Philippine Statistical Association.

MMGM GENERAL MERCHANDISE
MING & MOM GENERAL MERCHANDISE
ANGELICO ANG, MELVIN MEDRANO LIM
and ANGELICO L. BENDERSEN

APOLOGIZE

FOR SELLING COUNTERFEIT PRODUCTS BEARING THE TRADEMARKS OF MATTEL, INC.

We, MMGM GENERAL MERCHANDISE, MING & MOM GENERAL MERCHANDISE, ANGELICO ANG, MELVIN MEDRANO LIM and ANGELICO L. BENDERSEN (respondents in DOJ I.S. No. 2004-511) hereby unreservedly apologize to MATTEL, INC. for selling infringing products bearing its BARBIE trademark.

By doing so, we have contravened the Intellectual Property Code (Republic Act No. 8293) and infringed upon the intellectual property rights of MATTEL, INC.

We recognize that under Philippine law, it is a violation of another's trademark to manufacture, sell, offer to sell, and/or distribute products bearing unauthorized reproductions or simulations of such trademark.

Furthermore, the Intellectual Property Code provides that Trademark Infringement and/or Unfair Competition is punishable by imprisonment terms from 2 to 5 years and a fine from P50,000 to P200,000.

We thank MATTEL, INC. for the opportunity to reform and we will never commit any infringement again.

MATTEL

Barbie

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MATTEL, INC. ACCEPTS THE APOLOGY

MATTEL, INC. accepts the apology. As the owner-registrant of the above trademarks, it will not hesitate to prosecute any person found manufacturing, selling and/or distributing or offering to manufacture, sell and/or distribute products that falsely bear its trademarks or otherwise infringe its intellectual property rights.

Further information relating to our intellectual property rights may be obtained from our legal counsel in the Philippines.

FEDERIS & ASSOCIATES Law Offices
Counsel for Mattel, Inc.
Suite 2005 88 Corporate Center 141 Valero corner
Sedeño Streets, Salcedo Village, Makati City
Tel. Nos.: 889-6197/889-6198
Facsimile: 889-6132

(PDI - Dec. 23, 2004)

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY

Region VII, Cebu City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The National Food Authority, Region VII, Cebu City is inviting all interested licensed operators of vessels/barges whether owned through Baroboat/Time/Voyage Charter to apply for eligibility and to bid under the Letter Agreement for Vessel/Barge Hire for the shipment of rice from Cebu City to various destinations as indicated below:

VOLUME SCHEDULED FOR SEA DISPERSAL

DESTINATION		No. of Lots	Maximum Quantity/Lot (bags)	Freight Rate/bag	Approved Budget for the Contract per Lot
Province	Port				
Camotes Is.	Poro	10	7,000	16.70	116,900.00
Bantayan Is.	Sta. Fe	12	7,000	19.30	135,100.00
Bohol	Tagbilaran	1	18,000	22.30	401,400.00
		16	15,000		334,500.00
	Ubay	3	4,000	17.40	69,600.00
Negros Or.	Dumaguete	4	25,000	20.80	520,000.00
		5	18,000		374,400.00
Siquijor	Larena	1	10,000	20.30	203,000.00
		3	15,000		304,500.00
N. Leyte	Tacloban	4	32,000	26.20	838,400.00
		1	27,000		707,400.00
		4	25,000		655,000.00
	Ormoc	3	15,000	22.50	337,500.00
S. Leyte	Maasin	7	16,000	22.70	363,200.00
		1	13,000		295,100.00
	Baybay	4	15,000	21.50	322,500.00
Biliran	Naval	3	27,000	24.40	658,800.00
		1	14,000		341,600.00
		1	15,000		366,000.00
W. Samar	Catbalogan	6	25,000	24.40	610,000.00
		5	16,000		390,400.00
	Calbayog	4	15,000	24.40	366,000.00
		2	10,000		244,000.00
N. Samar	San Jose	4	17,000	27.20	462,400.00
		4	18,000		489,600.00
		4	25,000		680,000.00
E. Samar	Borongan	4	13,000	32.50	422,500.00
		1	18,000		585,000.00
		4	10,000		325,000.00
	Guian	5	13,000	28.60	371,800.00
		5	9,000		257,400.00
		5	10,000		286,000.00

Summary of Bidding Procedures:

The bidding shall be governed by RA 9184. A Single Stage, Two Envelope System of evaluation will be adopted. Envelope A shall contain the eligibility requirements as specified in the Instruction to Bidders which will be evaluated in a non-discretionary "Pass" or "Fail" criteria. Only those who complied with all the requirements shall be declared "Eligible" and shall proceed to the next phase which is the opening of Envelope B. Envelope B shall contain the accomplished and signed Bid Form.

Bids will be ranked from lowest to highest on a per lot basis to determine the Lowest Calculated Bid. The bidder with the lowest calculated bid shall undergo post qualification by the Regional Bids and Awards Committee (RBAC) to verify, validate and ascertain statements made and documents submitted in the eligibility requirements. After which, the bidder shall be declared "Lowest Calculated Responsive Bid" and shall be recommended for awarding of the contract.

Schedule of Activities:

Activity	Date	Time
Issuance of Bidding Documents	Dec. 23/04–Jan. 4/05	8:00 AM–5:00 PM
Pre-Bidding Conference	January 05, 2005	10:00 AM
Submission & Opening of Bids	January 20, 2005	10:00 AM

Interested bidders may secure the bidding documents from the RBAC Secretariat, 2nd Flr., NFA, Region VII, Cebu City after payment of a non-transferable, non-refundable application fee of P5,000.00. Bidders or their authorized representatives are required to be present during the opening of sealed bids. For further inquiries, you may call the undersigned in any for the following numbers: (032) 232-1939; (032) 232-6832.

The NFA reserves the right to reject any or all bid proposals, to waive any informality or defect found therein, and may accept bids which are deemed most advantageous to the Agency.

(Sgd.) PIOLITO C. SANTOS
Assistant Regional Director /
RBAC Chairman

(PDI–Dec. 23 & 30, 2004)

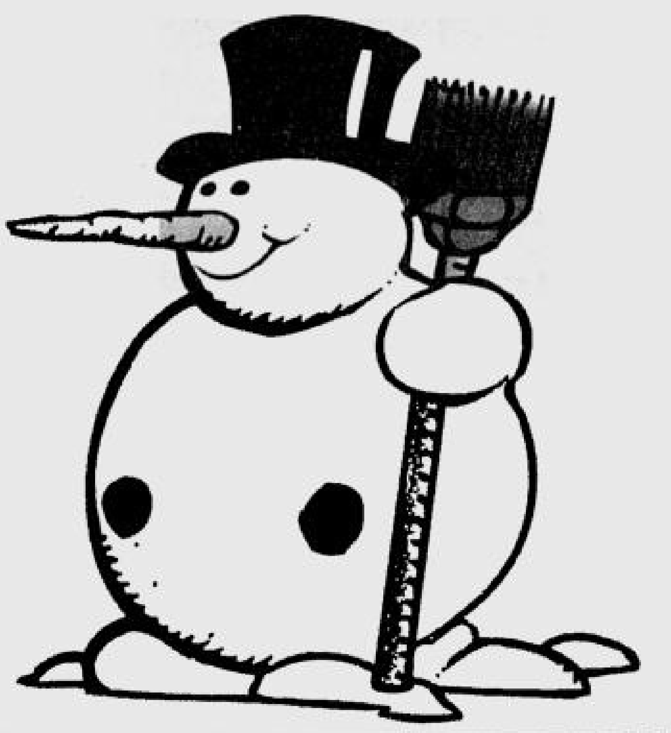
Philippine Daily Inquirer

MESSAGEBOARD

Christmas Post

Let your thoughts be heard and add the warmth and essence of heartfelt feelings to all the special people in your life. On December 24, 25 and 26, 2004, publish your personal holiday greetings and messages in Inquirer's "Christmas Post" and share with them the joy of this holiday season.

A serving of sweetness and a load of good cheer sent with warmest wishes to family and friends so dear courtesy of Inquirer Classifieds.



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Republic of the Philippines
REGIONAL TRIAL COURT
11th Judicial Region
BRANCH 10
Davao City

IN THE MATTER OF: PETITION FOR THE DECLARATION OF STATE OF SUSPENSION OF PAYMENTS WITH APPROVAL OF PROPOSED REHABILITATION PLAN

CIVIL CASE NO. 7816-04

LAND CAR, INCORPORATED,
Petitioner.
x---x

STAY ORDER

By this PETITION, Land Car, Incorporated, a domestic corporation duly organized and existing under the laws of the Republic of the Philippines with principal place of business at Km. 4, Bajada, Davao City, seeks the approval of its Rehabilitation Plan attached to the petition as Annex "G".

Petitioner alleged that it is primarily engaged in the business of overland transportation of passengers and freight and secondarily, in the purchase, assembly and sale of motor vehicles and the rendering of auxiliary services appurtenant thereto. It further alleged that it is a grantee of Certificates of Public Convenience to operate a bus line service in several areas.

Petitioner admits that it possesses sufficient properties to cover all its debts. Its total assets are worth P173,550,238.42 while its total liabilities amount to P142,036,295.22. It foresees its inability to meet its immediate obligations. If given a "breathing spell" or a temporary reprieve or moratorium from its immediate obligations falling due, it foresees a very good business future. It prays for the issuance of an order to stay all claims against it in the meantime that the rehabilitation plan is under consideration.

Finding the petition to the sufficient in form and substance, Myrna Papas Valdez c/o 11th Floor, Land Car Corporate Center, J.P. Laurel Avenue, Davao City, one of petitioner's nominees is hereby appointed rehabilitation receiver in accordance with the Interim Rules of Procedure on Corporate Rehabilitation, which took effect on December 15, 2000. She is required to post a bond hereby fixed at FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND PESOS (P500,000.00) in favor of Land Car, Incorporated to guarantee the faithful performance of her functions as receiver. She is directed to signify her acceptance or non-acceptance of this appointment within ten (10) days from receipt of this order.

The enforcement of all claims, whether for money or otherwise and whether by court action or otherwise, against the petitioner, its guarantors and sureties not solidarily liable with the debtor is hereby STAYED.

The petitioner is hereby prohibited from selling, encumbering, transferring or disposing in any manner of its properties except in the ordinary course of business.

It is prohibited from making any payment of its liabilities outstanding as of the date of filing of the petition.

The suppliers of goods and services of the petitioner are prohibited from withholding supplies thereof in the ordinary course of business as long as the latter pays for services and goods supplied after the issuance of this stay order.

The petitioner is hereby directed to pay in full all administrative, liabilities to be incurred after the issuance of this STAY ORDER.

The initial hearing of this petition is hereby set on January 27, 2005 at 8:30 a.m. The petitioner is directed to cause the publication of this Order in the Philippine Daily Inquirer once a week for two (2) consecutive weeks starting not later than seven (7) days from the issuance of this order.

All creditors and all other interested parties including the Securities and Exchange Commission are hereby directed to file and serve on the petitioner a verified comment on or opposition to the petition, with supporting affidavits and documents, not later than ten (10) days before the date of the initial hearing and putting them on notice that their failure to do so will bar them from participating in the proceedings.

The creditors and interested parties are hereby directed to secure from the Court copies of the petition and its annexes within such time as to enable themselves to file their comment and/or opposition to the petition and to prepare for the initial hearing on January 27, 2005, otherwise they will be barred from participating in the proceedings of this case.

SO ORDERED.

Given this 3rd day of December 2004, at Davao City, Philippines.

(Sgd.) VIRGINIA HOFILEÑA-EUROPA
Pairing Judge

(PDI - Dec. 23 & 29, 2004)

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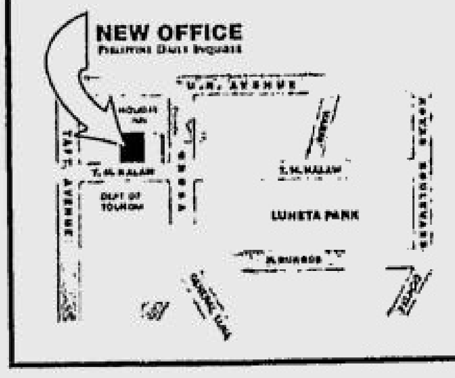

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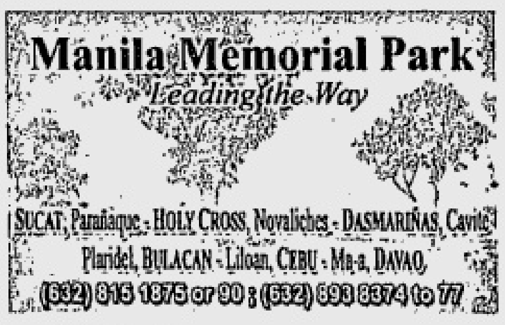
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OBITUARIES

From the Family of KC de Venecia

We appreciate your heartfelt condolences, prayers, flowers, messages of love and support, and for being there for our family during this difficult period in our lives.

We love KC very much and it pains us deeply that she was only here with us for a short time. We are blessed to have shared in her laughter and amazing zest for life.

We hope you continue to pray for our beloved KC. She is the most precious gift our Lord has shared with us.

May her light continue to shine and inspire us to be the way she was in life and in death—beautiful, fearless and with complete trust in Our Creator.

(Everyone is invited to the Ninth Day of Prayer for KC on December 25, 2:00 p.m. at the Main Chapel of Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park.)

Jesus said:
I am the resurrection, and the life; He that believeth in me though he were dead, yet shall he live
John 11:25

Brigadier Gen. DOMINGO T. RIO JR.

(Retired)

PMA Class 1957

Peacefully joined our Lord on December 19, 2004 at the age of 70.

Beloved wife **Carmen Larot Rio** and children **Richard, Irving, Odette, Sacha,** and **Katrina** and their spouses; grandchildren, brothers, sisters and relatives.

Interment will be on Monday, December 27, 2004 at the Philam Cemetery Com. Civil, Jaro, Iloilo City, at 12:00 noon.

NECROLOGICAL SERVICE –
CENTRAL PHIL UNIVERSITY at 9:00 a.m.

Elisa Realubit Sadullo

In Memory of our beloved Elisa R. Sadullo, devoted mother and handmaid of the Lord joined her Creator and Savior in peaceful bliss on December 21, 2004 at the age of 73.

Her children **Arlene, Marita, Jaime, Raul, Noel, Robert** and **John**; grandchildren **Jerome, Jem, Julianne**; daughters-in-law **Delia, Gemma, Grace**; brother and sister **Dadoy** and **Tering** request for you to join us in solemn prayer to celebrate Elisa's coming home to the Lord.

Her remains lie in state at Sanctuario del Sto. Cristo, San Juan, Metro Manila.

PHILIPPINE MARKETING ASSOCIATION

condoles with the family of the late

Gerardo Reyes Martinez

Peacefully joined our Lord on December 20, 2004.

Body lies in state at the La Funeraria Paz, Chapel A-3, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City until the night of December 24, 2004 and will be transferred to their house and will be cremated on December 28, 2004.

He is survived by his wife **Arlene Martinez** and children **Coco, Den-Den, Abby** and **Aiah**.

"I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are Yours."
John 17:9

ATTY. FRANCISCO G. BANZON

(June 21, 1935 - December 21, 2004)

Beloved husband to **Elma**,
devoted and caring father to **Cedric** and **Ma. Theresa Pedutem**, **Eduardo** and **Johanna Banzon**, **Francisco Conrado Banzon**,
doting grandfather to **FC** and **MTroy Pedutem**, **Dodi Banzon**,
generous brother, dedicated Christian lawyer,
gregarious coffee drinker and friend.

His remains lie in state at
Rolling Hills Memorial Chapel,
Mandalagan Street, Bacolod City.

Interment will be on December 30, 2004
at 9:00 a.m. at the Bacolod Memorial Park,
Bacolod City.

"Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to me."
Psalm 116:7

Emma Jacinto Rodriguez

Peacefully joined our Lord on December 21, 2004 at the age of 60.

Her bereaved husband **Luis**; sons **Louie** and **Rico**; mother **Naty**; brothers and sisters **Alice, Ben, Lina, Diwata, Frank** and **Gertie** and all relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies in state at La Funeraria Paz, G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Sunday, December 26, 2004 at North Cemetery after the 8:30 a.m. Mass.

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord." **2 Corinthians 5:8**

"Do not let your hearts
be troubled. Trust in
God, trust also in Me.
In My Father's house
are many rooms...
I am going there
to prepare a place
for you.
John 14:1-2

Asian stocks rise on US rally, Intel

SINGAPORE—Asian stocks rose on Wednesday as chip companies cheered a broker upgrade of Intel Corp. and a rally in US blue chips to 3-1/2-year highs.

Tokyo's Nikkei index ended up 0.8 percent at a five-week closing high of 11,209.44 as investors shrugged off weaker-than-expected trade data and drug makers tracked a rebound in their US peers.

"A slowdown in Japan's economy has mostly been factored into share prices as the Tokyo market has edged down since June. People are now focusing on the chances of Tokyo stocks playing catch-up with overseas markets," said Hiroshi Fujimoto at Okasan Capital Management.

Chip stocks led gains in Tokyo after Lehman Brothers raised its investment rating on Intel to "overweight" from "underweight", citing expectations of a solid fourth quarter and a strong product pipeline.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan had edged up 0.1 percent by 0615 GMT, while world stocks as measured by MSCI stood just below their highest level in nearly four years.

In currency trade, the dollar bought 104.37 yen little changed from late US levels, as the market dismissed a 39 percent fall in Japan's trade surplus in November.

Markets will focus on US gross domestic product and industrial production data later on Wednesday for fresh readings on the health of the world's largest economy.

Shares rose 0.5 percent in Australia, lifted by a 0.4-percent rise in BHP Billiton on strong metals prices.

Hong Kong was the only loser among major Asian indexes, falling 0.3 percent as investors locked in profits. Shares edged up 0.2 percent in Taiwan, while Singapore and South Korea were flat.

So far this year, shares have gained 22 percent in Australia, 17 percent in Singapore, 12 percent in Hong Kong, 9 percent in South Korea, 5 percent in Japan and nearly 2 percent in Taiwan. *Reuters*

Japan trade surplus down

TOKYO—Japan's trade surplus unexpectedly fell in November from a year earlier, underlining concern about the impact of slower export growth on the sluggish economy as consumer spending at home remained weak.

With a rise in oil prices pushing imports to a record monthly high, the trade surplus dropped 39.2 percent from the same month a year earlier to 602.0 billion yen ($5.77 billion), data from the Ministry of Finance showed on Wednesday.

The surplus was much smaller than a consensus forecast of 1.0039 trillion yen. It was, however, up 16.2 percent from October on a seasonally adjusted basis.

The figures, along with data showing service sector activity fell for the first time in three months in October, added to concern about Japan's economic recovery, which has been showing signs of stalling.

"The decline in the trade surplus confirms the impact from slower growth in overseas economies," said Osamu Tanaka, an economist at Morgan Stanley.

"Looking forward, we expect a further slowdown in the trade surplus, but it won't be a serious adjustment."

Exports have been the main engine of Japan's two-year-old economic recovery, but external demand became a negative contributor to growth in gross domestic product (GDP) for the first time in eight quarters in the three months to September.

Still, strong demand for steel and cars pushed exports up by 13.4 percent in November from a year earlier and by 1.0 percent from October.

Exports to China were up 21.8 percent from a year earlier, although that was well below the break-neck pace of more than 40 percent seen earlier this year.

Economists said one bright aspect of recent trade figures was a pick-up in exports to the United States, reflecting renewed strength in the world's largest economy. *Reuters*

● 1:00 pm
● 2:15 pm
● 1:15 pm
● 2:00 pm
● 1:30 pm
● 1:45 pm

A [illegible] f your tim[illegible] an heal his painful past

Hands on Manila is a non-profit organization that recruits, educates and coordinates a network of volunteers for community projects. We have over 30 service programs to choose from ranging from literacy, arts, sports, housing and counselling among others. If you feel you are called to serve, here's our number: 843-7044 or e-mail us at homla@info.com.ph. A little of your time heals all wounds.

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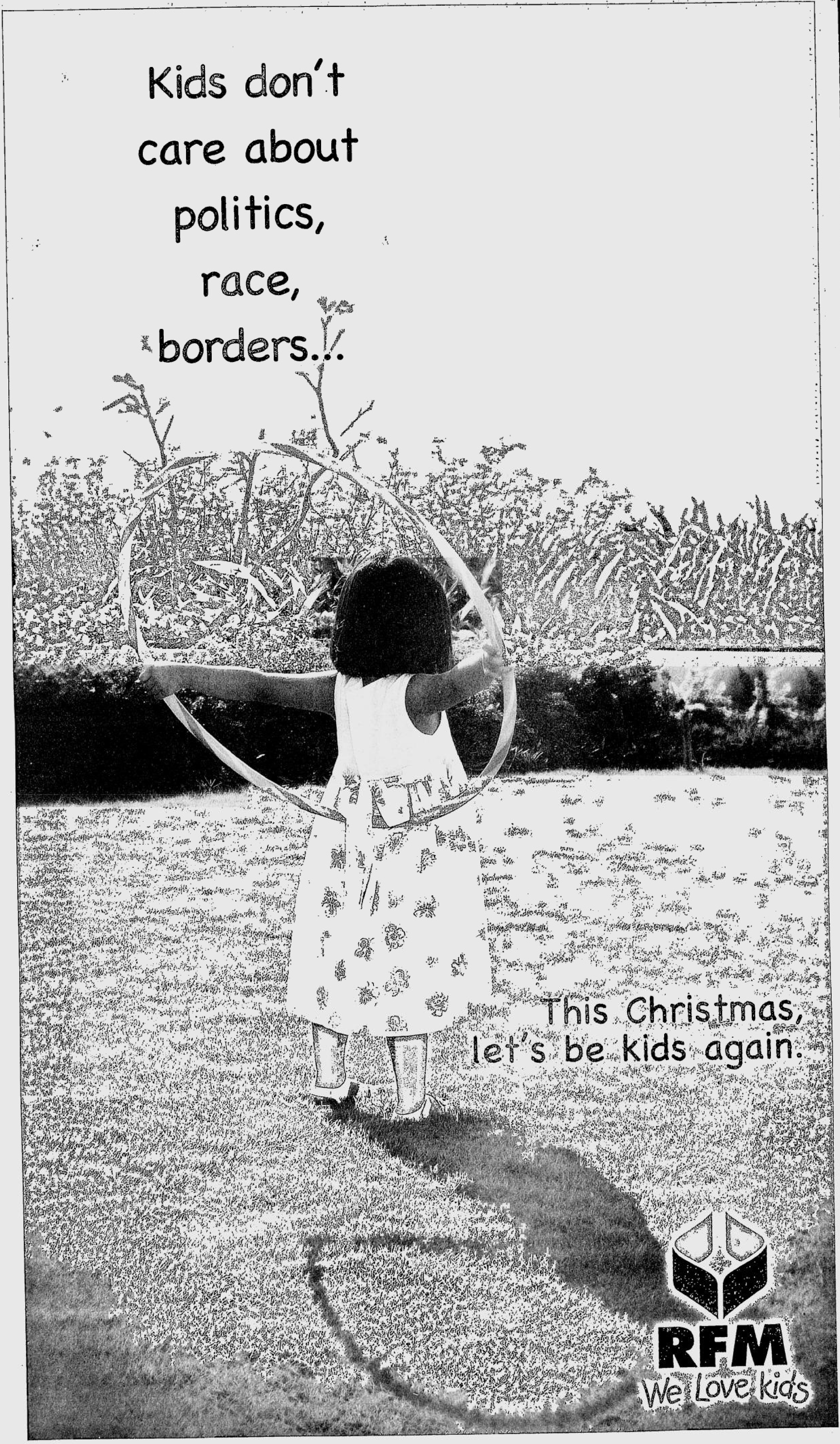
Kids don't
care about
politics,
race,
borders...
This Christmas,
let's be kids again.
RFM
We Love kids

HASSLE-FREE Noche Buena /D1

LIFESTYLE

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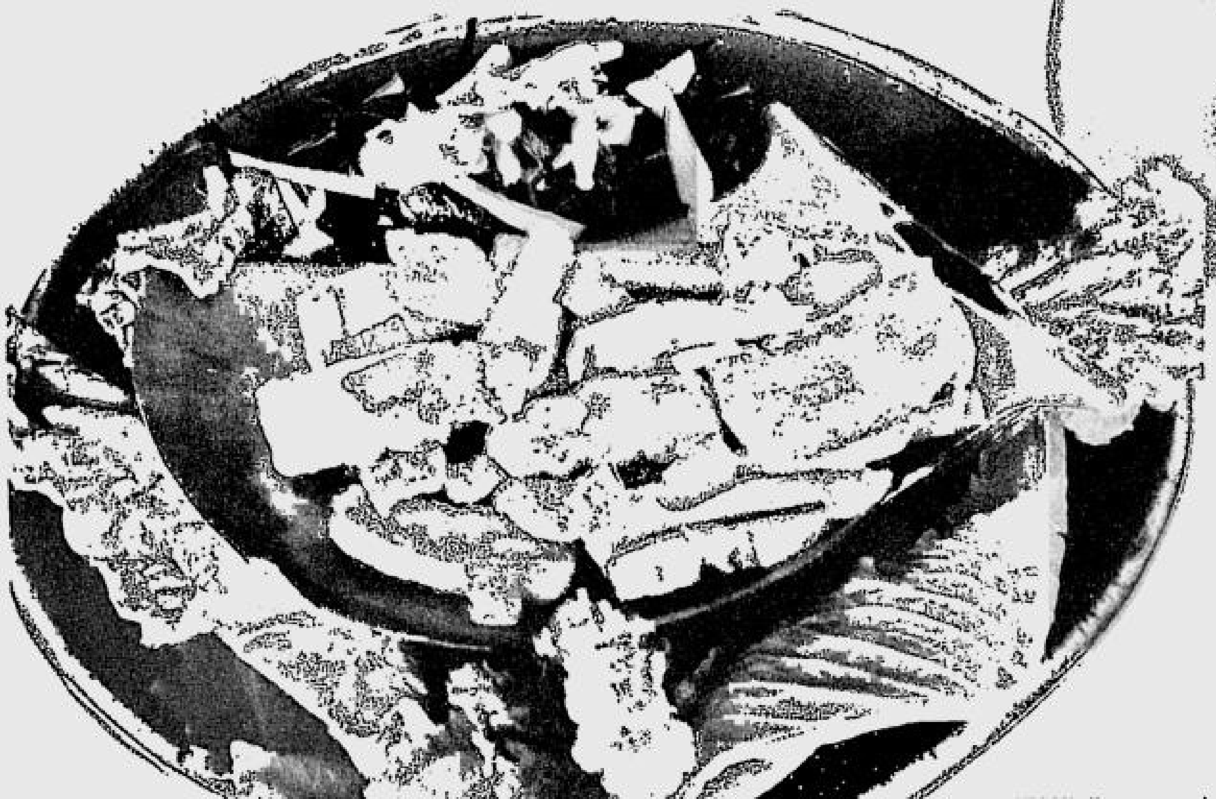
Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso**

A healthful Noche Buena

LUMPIA Shangbang



TOFU Kinilaw served with Talbos Salad

PHOTOS BY ROGER CARPIO

Is it possible to have a Noche Buena consisting of only organic food? If you're Mara Pardo de Tavera, it is.

Going traditional and natural this Christmas is no problem for the irrepressible force behind the organic market, which she has been espousing for 11 years now. Mara is also in the group that's attempting to promote the Slow Food Movement, an advocacy that first took roots in Europe to counter the fast-food culture.

Lifestyle invited Mara to come up with a Christmas spread that uses organic, chemical-free ingredients. Not only is her menu filling and attractive, it's healthful, too.

Pandan Ice Tea

Simply take *pandan* leaves (1 leaf is good for 2 cups) and boil with filtered, mineral water in a stainless steel pot for about 5 minutes on low flame. Let cool for 2 minutes then sweeten with *muscovado* sugar (1/2 tsp per cup).

Tofu Kinilaw served with Talbos Salad

Take tofu, pat off excess water with unbleached paper towels. Slice tofu to frying size. Fry in EVCO (extra virgin coco oil) on low flame to avoid burning (which is carcinogenic). Let dry on paper towels also. Set aside.

Boil mineral water for *talbos* (of *kamote*; I use red and green, then I use the water for an

A HEALTHFUL/ C2

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Register your child's number now! Text REG to 2811 using your Globe Prepaid or G-plan to start availing of these offers.

'tis the season to make great things possible Globe HANDYPHONE

MECHANICS:

1. All registered Globe Gizmo Prepaid subscribers are entitled to join the promo. To avail of the offer, child must first text WISH to 2811 using a Globe Gizmo Prepaid SIM. This text is free of charge.
2. Child will receive a text reply asking him/her about his/her Christmas wish. Child must reply with "1" to check out the possible Christmas gifts offered in the promo.
3. Child will be prompted to choose from a list of possible gift wishes: Guess Kids clothes, Robosapien toy, or watch Disney On Ice at Araneta Coliseum. Child can choose desired wish by replying to 2811 with the number of the chosen gift.
4. Child will then receive a message informing him/her that Santa received his/her wish. The system will send a text message to the parent informing him/her of the child's wish with any of the following discount mobile coupons:
   - 30% off on Disney On Ice Ticket purchases (weekday shows) at the Ticketnet Araneta Center outlet from December 10 to January 2.
   - 15% off on clothes purchased at all Guess Kids outlets in GMA from December 10 to January 15.
   - 20% discount (₱1,000 off) with every 14" Robosapien purchase at participating Kidz Station, Rustan and Toy Kingdom outlets in GMA, Cavite, Pampanga and Batangas from December 10 to January 15.

Sample Mobile Coupon:

Show this text to participating Toy Kingdom, Kidz Station and Rustan outlets to avail of 20% off on the 14" Robosapien

5. Parent shall present the discount mobile coupon at the participating outlet to avail of the discount.
6. The child can choose up to 3 different gift wishes. If the child wishes for a gift item twice, parent will only receive 1 discount mobile coupon for the 2 wishes
7. If more than 1 child is registered under the parent, and all children wished for the same gift, parent will receive 1 discount mobile coupon per child.

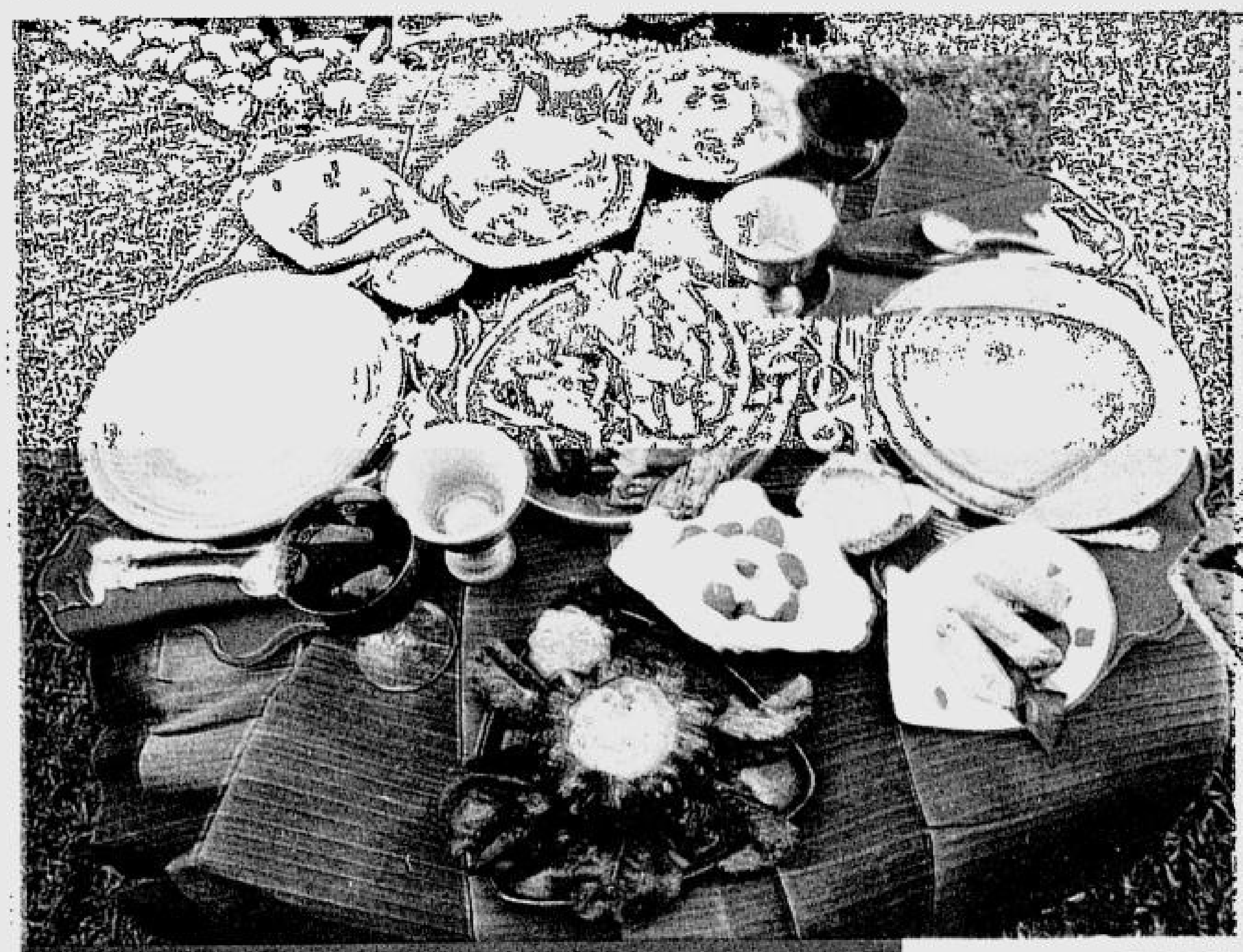
PROMO PERIOD:
December 10, 2004 to January 15, 2005

For more information about Globe Gizmo Prepaid, call GlobeTelecom Customer Service at 730-1000.

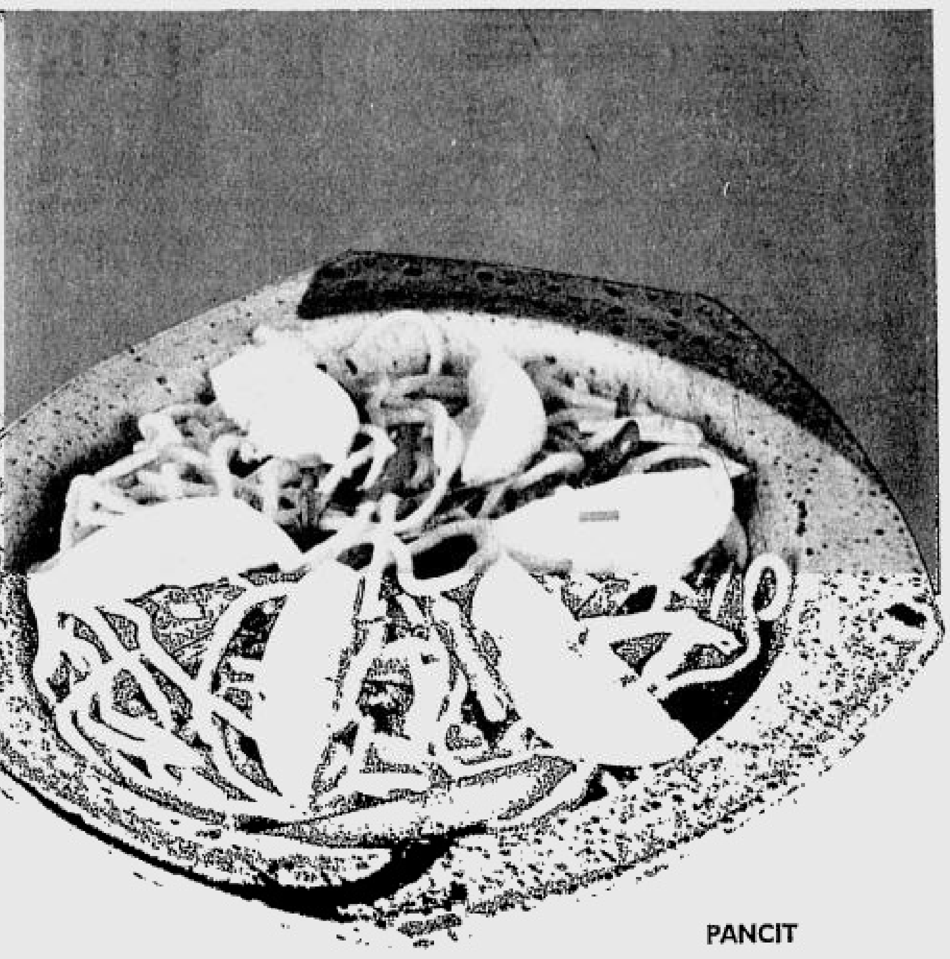
TOY KINGDOM THE AMAZING TOY STORE!
Rustan KIDZ STATION

Robosapiens is exclusively distributed by KIDSMARK PACIFIC CORP.
For inquiries, call 898-1933 to 42 loc. 207

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 5992, Series of 2004.



ORGANIC Noche Buena spread



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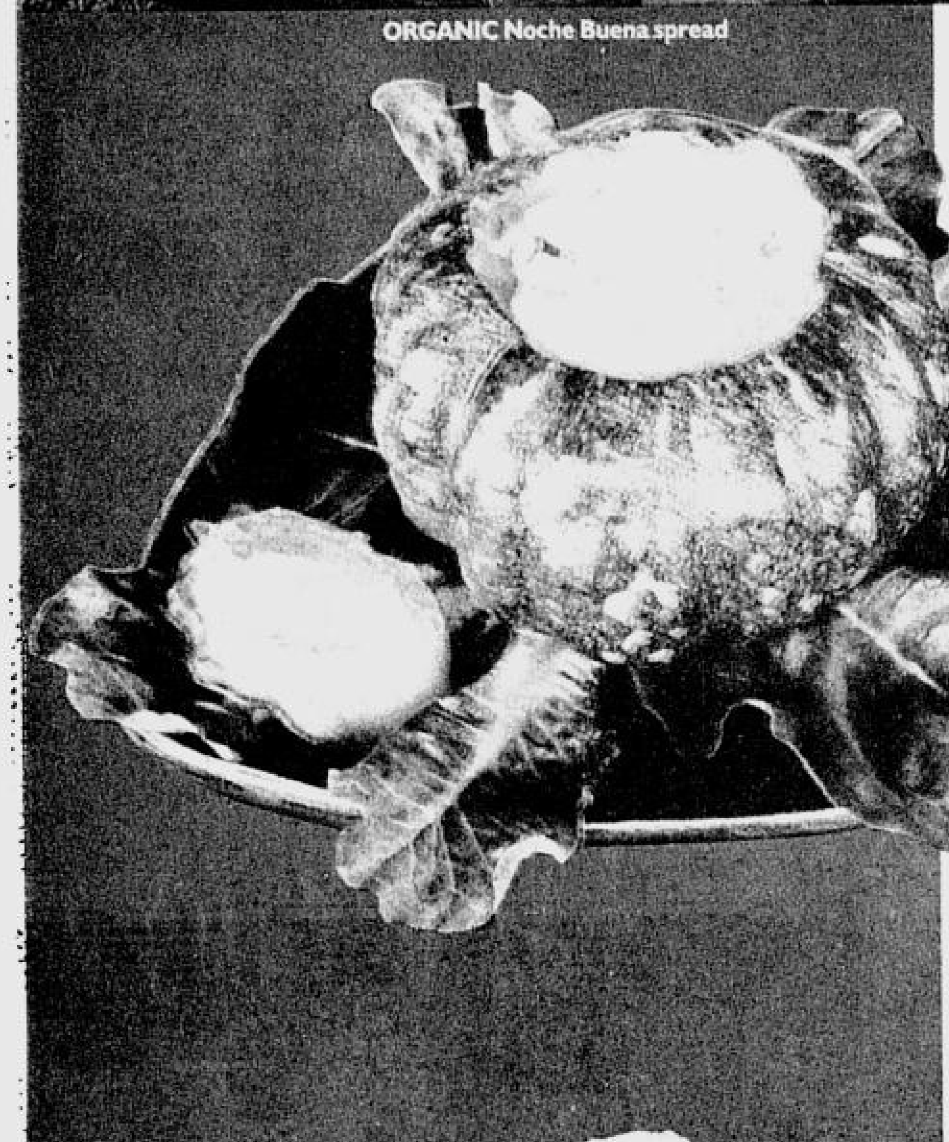
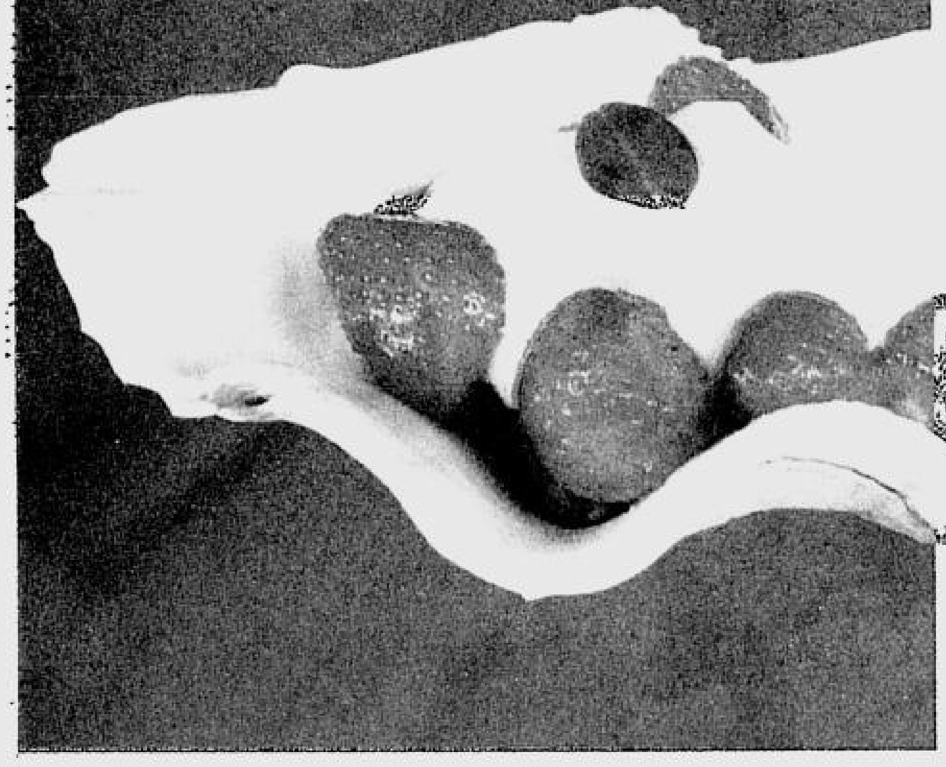


STUFFED Kalabasa



STRAWBERRY Chantilly

A healthful Noche Buena

From page C1

iced drink later). Throw *talbos* in, quickly remove and set aside.

Before anything, prepare *nipa* vinegar (1 cup), add in dash of pepper, slivers of ginger and shallots, about 1/2 cup and chopped tomato. Make enough for marinating tofu fries and *talbos*. Serve.

Stuffed Kalabasa

Take small ones (about 300 grams). Brush clean then make a "hat" with the stem centertop. Remove insides. Separate seeds. Take pulp and mix in sauté of lots of onions, shallots, garlic, carrots and French string beans mixed in tofu mash (do in blender with little EVOO (extra virgin olive oil). Place this mixture back into *kalabasa*, cover, then bake for about 30 minutes in 350°F oven. Serve on a bed of lollarossa lettuce.

Lumpia Shangbang

Take one of our natural *bangus* (no hormones and antibiotics). Remove meat from skin and also separate dark meats. Chop finely onions, garlic, carrots, *singkamas* and string beans. Sauté all this in EVOO until cooked, about 10 minutes. Let cool. Then wrap in *lumpia* wrappers (can somebody please make these organically for me?), not so thin to make them crunchier! Fry in EVOO, low flames for about three minutes on each side.

Sweet sour sauce: Sauté lots of onions and garlic. Add flour to make a roux. Then add broth, vinegar and little sugar. Sesame seeds and chili are optional.

Guinataan Chicken

Take an organic chicken (no hormones and antibiotics) and de-bone.

Take meat and cut into strips. Sprinkle with pepper, miso and EVOO. Marinate for about two hours then sprinkle with flour and grill, half cook only. In a separate pot, place thick *gata* after sautéing garlic and onions in EVOO. Let it get thick and add *tanglad*, okra and chicken. At the end, sprinkle with lots of *malunggay*. Use bones for broth (add ginger and *tanglad* and let cook for an hour). Use this for pancit.

Pancit

Use fresh noodles from the supermarket. Boil quickly in broth. Sauté slivered vegetables: carrots, onions, Baguio beans, *singkamas*, mushrooms and garlic. Then add everything to *pancit*.

Serve with *kalamansi* or soy sauce (organic please!).

Garlic Fried Talaongkan

This fantastic variety of short grain rice from the Sagada area, is a treat!

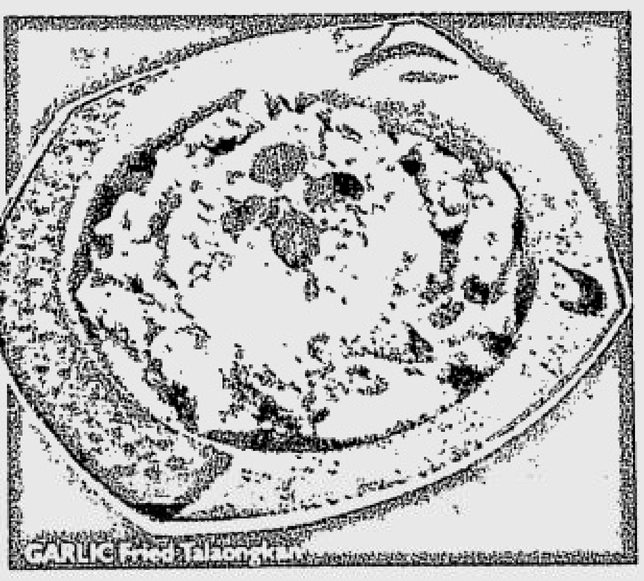
Cook 1 cup rice with 2 cups filtered water. Add a *pandan* ribbon-knot. Cook for about 40 minutes. Let cool. Then stir-fry with garlic and EVOO.

Strawberry Chantilly

We have great organic strawberries now! Clean and remove green stems.

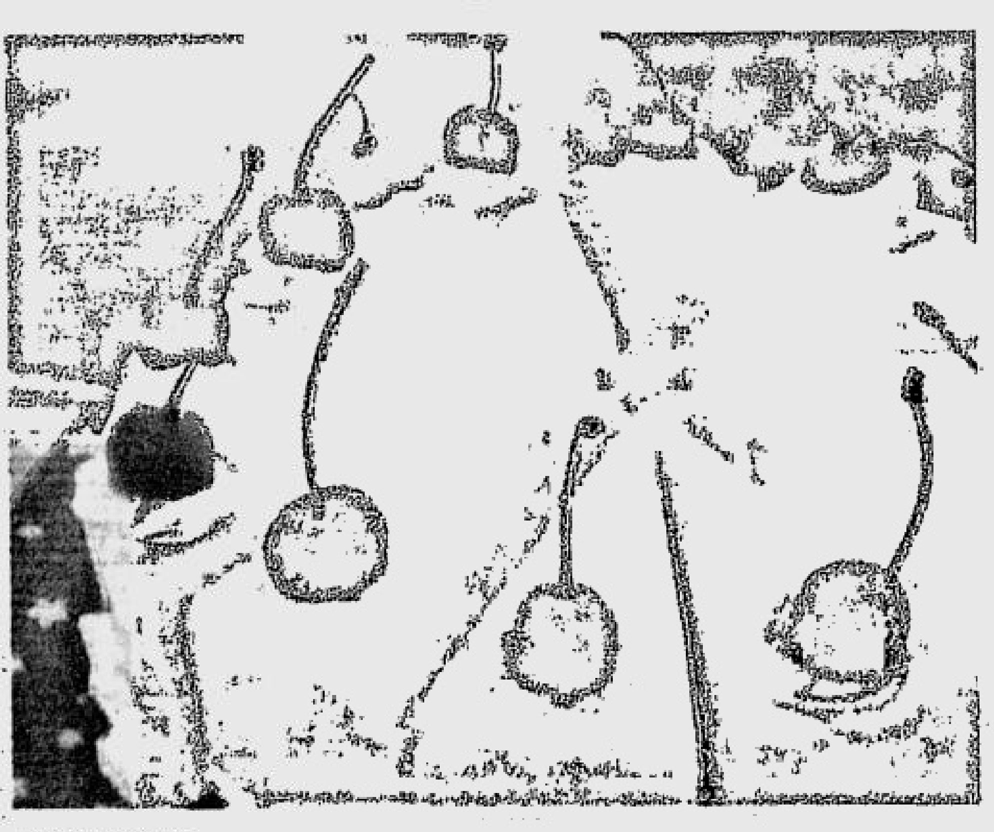
Freeze. Then thaw 15 minutes before serving.

Make tofu Chantilly with 1 pack of organic tofu, blended in honey.



GARLIC Fried Talaongkan

Screaming for ice cream cakes, too



CREMA de fruta

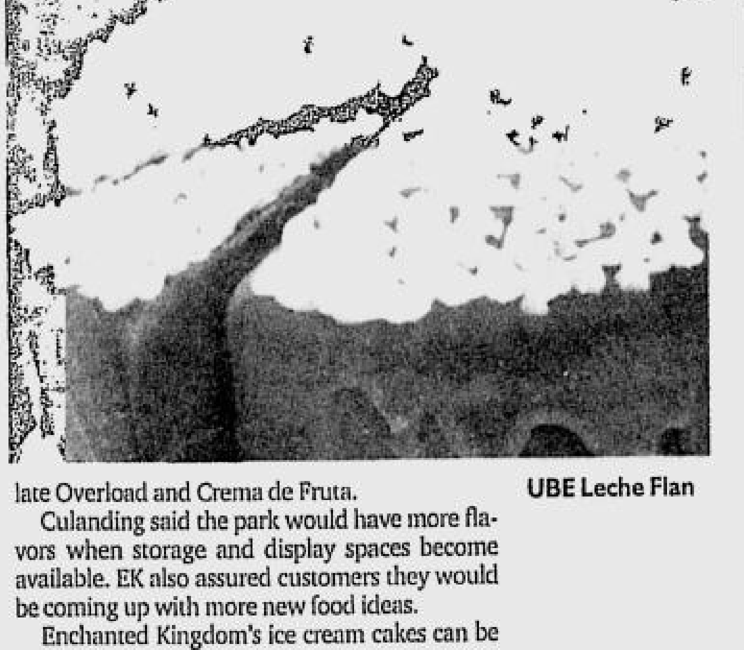
GUESTS at Enchanted Kingdom are now screaming not just in excitement and exhilaration over the thrilling rides but also for the scrumptious ice cream cakes that are now being made by the park's chefs.

Susan Romero, assistant vice president for retail operations, said the park had really been developing new menu items. They came up with the idea of ice cream cakes as they went well with EK's fun image.

Though the park's food outlets had been serving the usual cakes like carrot and chocolate fudge, they still felt something was missing.

Olga Gonzales, former section head for retail operations, said making the ice cream was not easy. "First, we bake the bottom layer sponge cake. While it cools, we soften the first layer of ice cream. This is poured on top of the cooled cake and frozen overnight. Only then can we pour the next ice cream layer over the frozen one. When the layers are complete, the top is decorated with cream and fruits, or the ingredients needed for the particular ice cream cake flavor."

Romina Culanding, section head for food services, said EK ice cream cakes were available in the following flavors: Peaches 'n Mangoes Torte, Banana Split Classic, Mocha Chocolata, Black and White Choco Crunch, Buco Pandan Salad, Ube Leche Flan, Chunky Oreos 'n Cream, Chocolate Overload and Crema de Fruta.



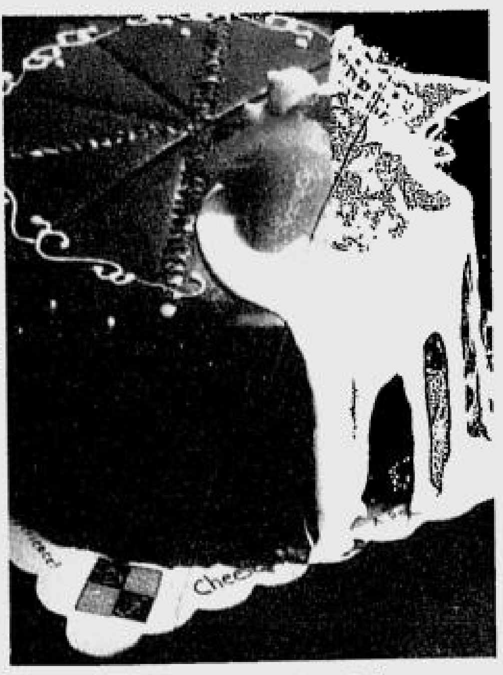
UBE Leche Flan

Culanding said the park would have more flavors when storage and display spaces become available. EK also assured customers they would be coming up with more new food ideas.

Enchanted Kingdom's ice cream cakes can be enjoyed at the park's food outlets for P70 per slice or P850 for a whole cake. They are also available for delivery within the Sta. Rosa area.

Guests can also take them home placed in customized styro boxes. The cakes will retain their shapes for up to two hours of travel inside an air-conditioned vehicle. They may also be available in the future at Enchanted Kingdom's Makati office.

Christmas confections


CHOCOLATE True Confection Cake

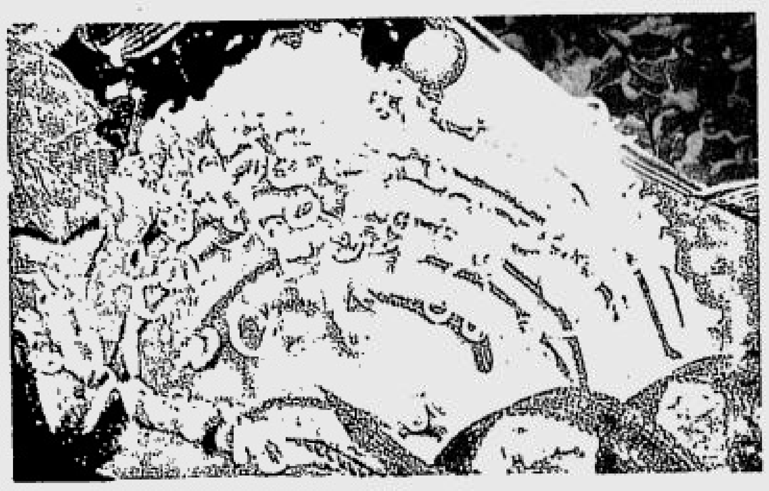
CHEESECAKE Etc. is inviting everyone to try special treats especially made for the holidays.

These include the Christmas Dome Cake, layers of Forest Berry Cheesecake and White Chocolate Mousse encased in Almond Sponge Cake and covered with delectable White Chocolate Ganache; and the Chocolate True Confection, layers of super moist chocolate cake with chocolate enamel filling.

The store also serves drinks that will complement the baked items—Hot Apple Cider, made from fermented apples spiced with cinnamon, and hot and cold Ghirardelli chocolate drinks, rich, creamy drinks made from San Francisco's No. 1 chocolate.

The Christmas Dome Cake and Chocolate True Confection Cake are available in slices and whole cakes. Whole cakes come in attractive purple gift boxes with handles.

Cheesecake Etc. has branches at Glorietta, Greenbelt, Rufino corner Leviste Streets in Makati, Robinsons Galleria and Ermita, Ashcreek Center, Greenhills Shopping Center, Alabang Town Center, SM Megamall and Podium, Tomas Morato, and the newly opened branch at Eastwood City Walk.


CHRISTMAS Dome Cake

HOT Apple Cider

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VETERANS VILL. PROJ.7 Q.C

Winterscapes at the
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Feel the rush of crisp nippy air at this side of the world as Holiday Inn Galleria Manila brings a dreamy, misty, Winterscape Christmas getaway for the whole family this season.

Share with loved ones and friends the spirit of comfort and togetherness with the hotel's Winter Holiday Room package. Book for two succeeding nights for only P8,000.00 ++ and get the third night for free. Package includes Family deluxe room accommodation, buffet breakfast for two adults and two kids, plus a chance to bring home Winter Bratz dolls, Knex, Gundam and Zoids toys. First 25 bookers enjoy two movie passes to Robinson's Movieworld

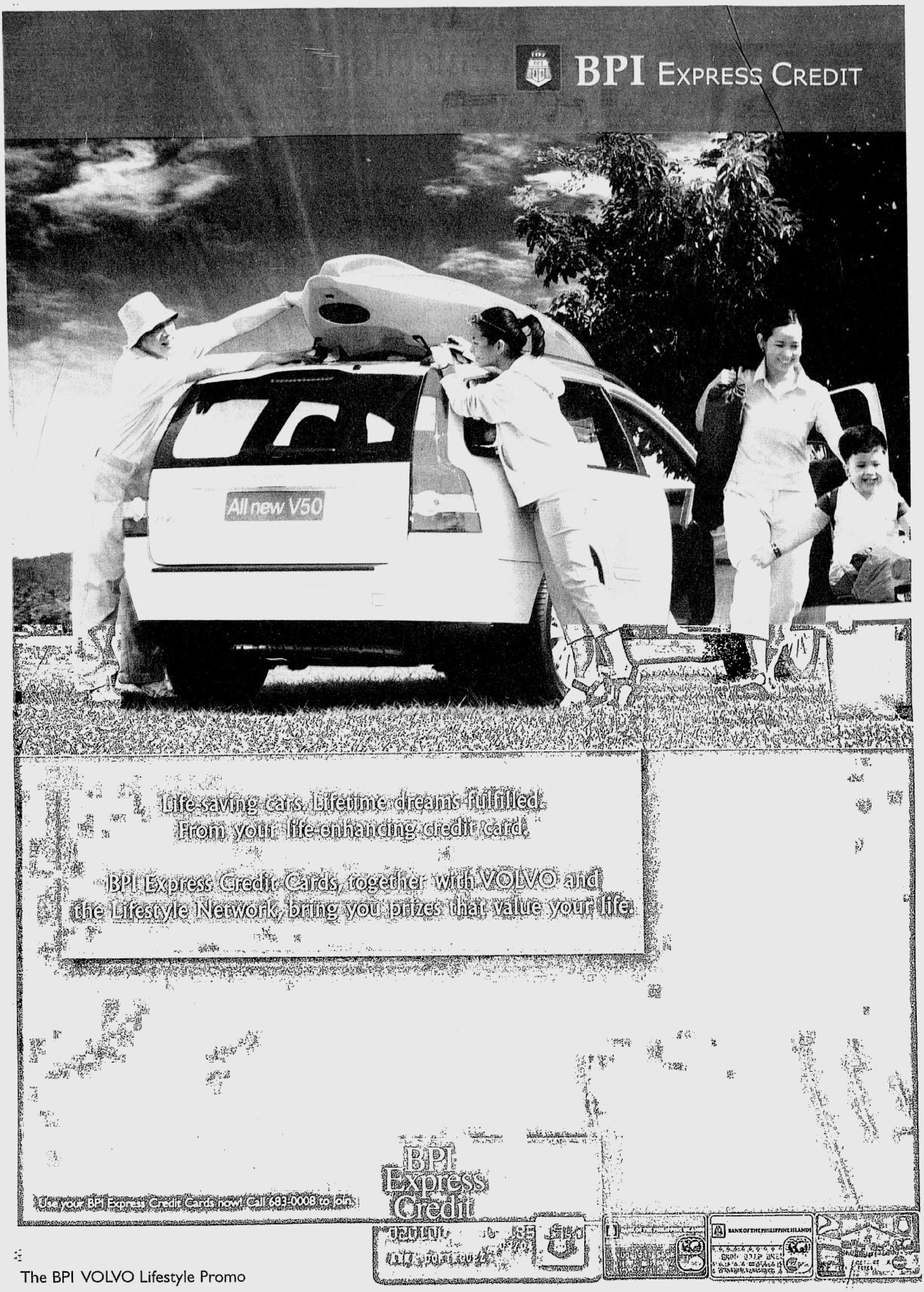
Or, get 30% off on all local rates when booking in any of the hotel's suites.

Promo runs December 1 – January 1, 2005. Packages are only valid for residents of the Philippines. Advance reservation is required. For details and reservation, please call 633-7111 local 7402.

If it's a gourmet adventure one is up for, be mesmerized with Holiday Inn Galleria Manila's sumptuous myriad of holiday flavors. Cozy up with friends and family members over good food, cool entertainment and overflowing drinks at any of the hotel's food and beverage outlets. Savor a daily treat of freshly baked Puto Bumbong and Bibingka, Christmas Goodies and invigorating Holiday Chill drink the whole month of December. Special buffet meals are prepared as well for the hotel's Christmas Eve Dinner, Christmas Day Lunch, New Year's Eve Dinner and New Year's Day Lunch offerings at Raphael Café-Restaurant. Also, drink all you can Wine and Beer while welcoming the New Year with a Countdown Party at the Monet Bar-Lounge.

For details on food and beverage promotions, please call 633-7111 local 7440 or 7416.

Holiday Feast
Cream Cheese
Stuffed Crust Pizza
Dear Santa,
make your
merry
choice.
Chicken Relleno
Cream Cheese
Stuffed Crust Pizza
Holiday Picks
The best way to say
Merry Christmas
Available from November 25, 2004 to January 10, 2005.
FREE watch for every Christmas Feast Bundle offer.
Pizza Hut
911-11-11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Use your BPI Express Credit Cards now! Call 683-0008 to join.
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The BPI VOLVO Lifestyle Promo

For BPI Express Credit Classic/Burgundy, Blue MasterCard and Gold MasterCard, every ₱500 single purchase entitles cardholder to one raffle entry. To join, just register your purchase by calling the promo hotline: 683-0008 for Metro Manila and 1-800-10-683-0008 for provincial cardholders or email bpi.lifestyle@1isa.com. Promo period: November 15, 2004 to April 30, 2005.

For Petron-BPI MasterCard, every ₱500 fuel purchase in participating Petron stations entitles cardholder to one raffle coupon. To join, just drop coupons at these stations. Promo period: October 21, 2004 to April 30, 2005.

Plus a chance to win a dream prize package worth ₱800,000 in the Lifestyle Dream Card Rewards promo: Asian Cruise for 2, Home Remodelling, Home Entertainment Showcase, Rustan's Shopping Spree, Hotel and Dining Gift Certificates and Gym Membership at Fitness First. Just tune in to the Lifestyle Channel for more details. Promo period: November 6, 2004 to February 4, 2005.

See flyers for details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 3121, Series of 2004

See flyers for details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 2521, Series of 2004

See flyers for details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 2731, Series of 2004

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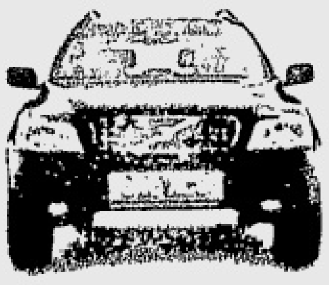
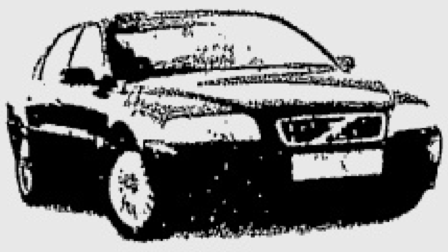


VOLVO XC90 SUV. Prize for Petron-BPI MasterCard



VOLVO S80 Executive Sedan. Prize for BPI Express Credit Gold MasterCard

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for life

Approved applications during the promo period will also earn raffle entries. For application and inquiries, call BPI Express Phone 89-100, visit any BPI or BPI Family Bank branch or Express Banking Center or log on to www.bpiexpressonline.com

LIFESTYLE

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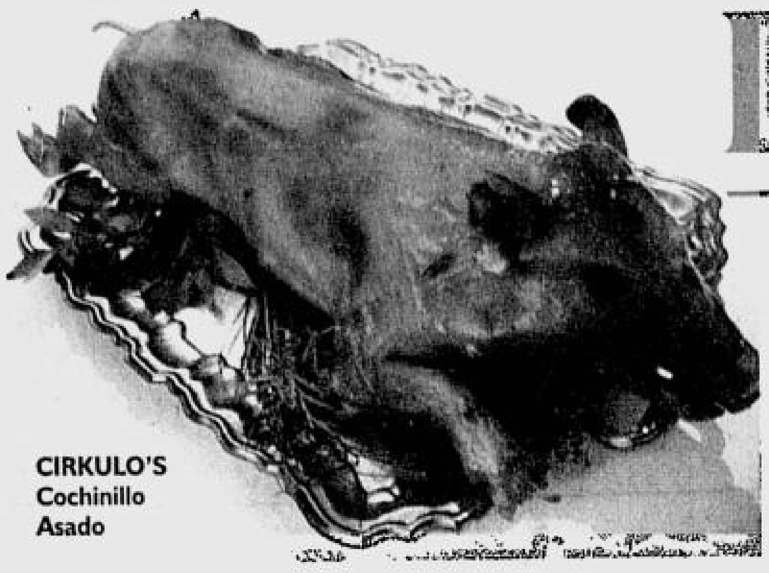
No-cooking Noche Buena



CIRKULO'S Cochinillo Asado

Instead of slaving over a hot stove, let a professional chef do the work for you

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

ON KITCHEN Rescue, I've done a list of "my favorites" over and over again. It either comes out as a list, a story or a special mention of people, places and things.

It is best described perhaps as my tribute to those whose contributions to the world of food or the world in general are substantial enough to be told, noticed and recognized. It acknowledges skill, hard work, talent, love for craft and dedication to duty.

After all, everyone needs a pat on the back!

Last minute Christmas list

(Where to go for what)

- Leave the holiday cooking to my good friend and one of my favorite chefs, J Gamboa of Cirkulo and Milky Way. Your food will be ready to eat on the day you specify—styled and packaged.

My favorites from J's menu: Paella Cirkulo (with Duck, Chorizo, Pork Tenderloin), Paella Montaña (Portobella Mushrooms, Roasted Garlic, Truffle Oil), Roast Beef and Beef Belly, Assorted Milky Way Sandwiches, Cochinillo Asado, Holiday Salads (Buco Pandan, Fruit Salad, Buco Salad, Bacon Potato, Chicken Macaroni), Japanese Spaghetti (per half gallon). Call 8108735 or 8102763.

- Still have some last-minute food shopping to do? Go to The Mandarin Oriental. Get their duck liver pate and goose liver terrine brioche and Port wine jelly. Delicious! Beautifully packaged, too. Thanks Charisse. My mom and I enjoyed them tremendously.

Other things of interest at the Mandarin that you can order—whole roast turkey with chestnut stuffing and assorted vegetables, gravy and cranberry sauce; whole roast Christmas goose with stuffing, assorted vegetables and liver sauce; assorted deluxe

NO-COOKING/ D3

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1 Point = P1 Load

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Sangkalan Grill
The Ark's Restaurant

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Consumer's Incentives, Inc.
Eiko Fashion
Hang Ten (Batangas Branch)
Ink Man
Kuryente
Krizia Ladies
Krizzie
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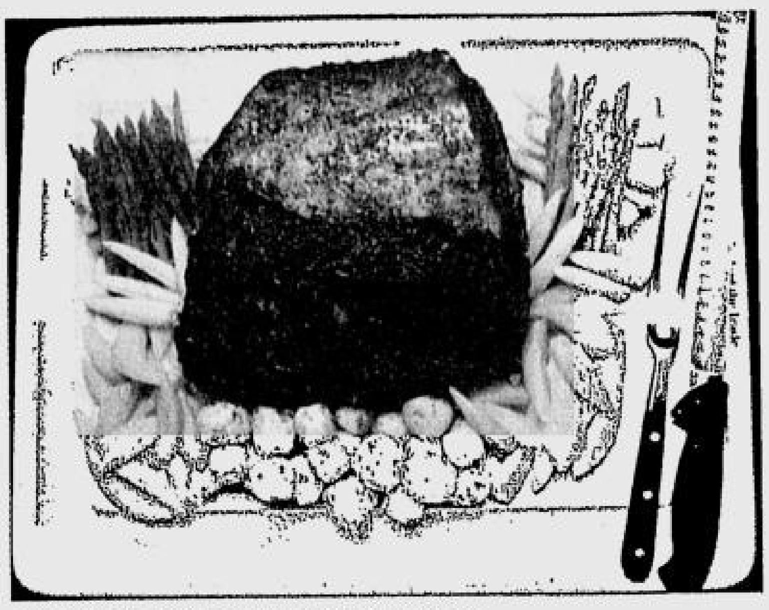
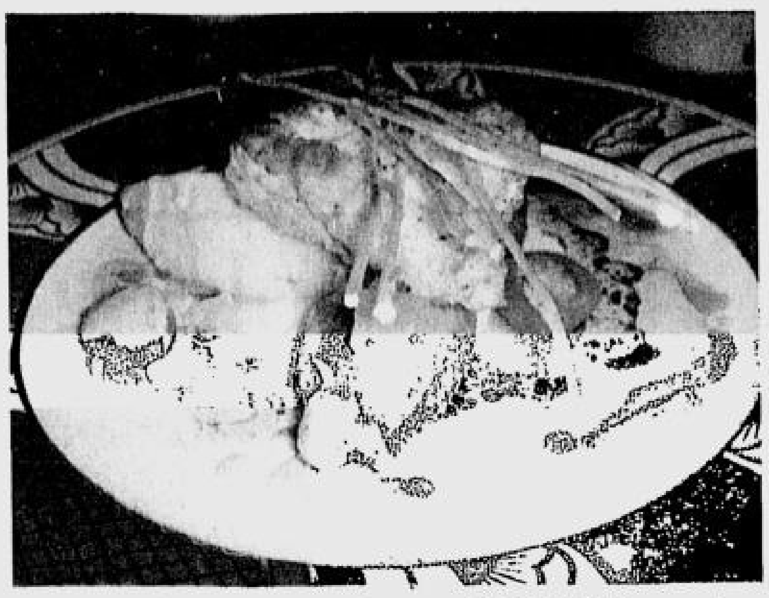


ROAST US-certified Angus Rib Eye of Beef



OVEN-ROASTED Fillet of Baby Garoupa with Crab Fat Foam and a Soya-Butter Reduction

FOIE Gras on Gratinated New Potatoes with Poached Pears

Controversy turns café into catering business

COCKTAILS at the CCP

MON and Monique Eugenio would have opened Connections Café at the departure level of the new Terminal Three of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

But with the controversy surrounding the project remaining unresolved until now, what was going to be a café became instead the Connections Catering Co.

With chef Mel Resuma, Monique's former boss at Mandarin Oriental's Tivoli Grill, as partner in charge of kitchen operations, the company started by cooking for the couple's family and friends. The first "customers" recommended the company to their own families and friends.

The partners combined their experiences to prepare elegant and intimate dinners as a caterer cum private chef.

Mon, a graduate of the California Culinary Academy, was a food and beverage management trainee of the Nagoya Hilton in Japan where he observed the restaurant operations of the hotel's six outlets, particularly Seasons Restaurant, the French fine dining restaurant. Back in Manila, he managed Shangri-La Makati's Cheval Blanc and Island Café.

Monique, who prepares the desserts, trained with Jacques Torres (of Food Network fame) at Le Cirque in New York, Francois Payard of Restaurant Daniel and Steve Scudder of Paper Moon. She graduated from the French Culinary Institute in New York.

Chef Mel started with Prince Albert at Hotel InterContinental, then worked in Truffles Restaurant and Shangri-La's main kitchen. He was a demi-chef at Tivoli Grill when he joined the company.

Sit-down dinners

Connections Catering Co. prepares sit-down dinners in the hosts' own kitchens at home. But it takes care of everything including the china, glasses and silver, to accessories and accents. The host or hostess simply attends to the guests.

In preparing meals, the Eugenios find out as much as they can about the host/hostess and the prospective guests. They try to accommodate as much as they can their host or hostess' wishes.

EARL Grey Chocolate Mousse

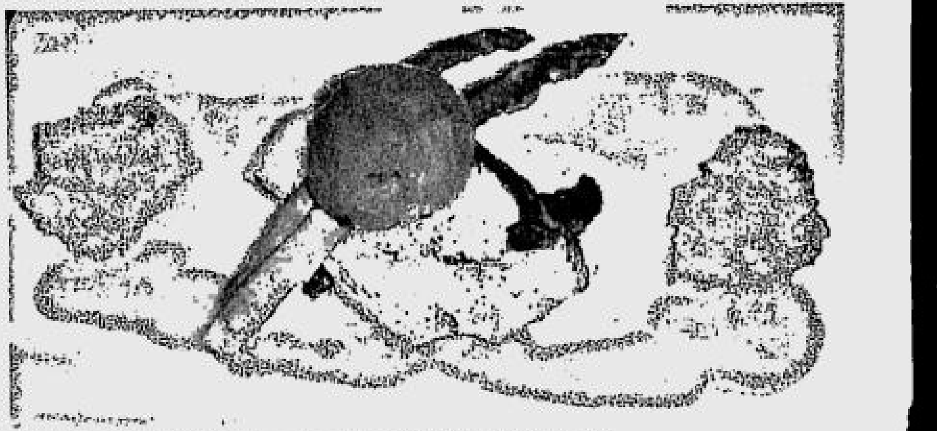
STRAWBERRY and Pistachio Napoleon

A request for a nouvelle Filipino sit-down dinner resulted in continental dishes with distinctly Filipino touches: a Heart of Palm Tower with Bacon, Bean and Wild Mushroom Ragout laced with *Sukang* Ilocos Vinaigrette, Seared Foie Gras with Guava Sauce set on a Cannelloni of Sauteed Spinach and Marinated Laguna Cheese, Oven-Roasted Fillet of Baby Garoupa with Crab Fat Foam and Soya-Butter Reduction, and Monique's Mango Mascarpone Napoleon served with homemade *Barako* Bean Ice Cream, made of pure carabao milk.

Sandy Daza wrote in his INQUIRER column Word of Mouth that the Connections' US-certified Angus Prime Rib was "simply outstanding" and the accompanying Cabernet Sauvignon-Shallot Jus, "out of this world."

For Christmas, Connections Catering Co. offers, in addition to the roast beef, Roast Boneless Australian Leg of Lamb with Apricot-Rosemary Jus, and Roast US Turkey with Brandy-scented Turkey Jus and Cranberry Jelly, Creamy Cepes Sauce and a Foie Gras-Pinot Noir Sauce for the roast beef. All carvings come with sautéed garden vegetables that include asparagus, young corn, carrots, pumpkin, baby potatoes and roasted garlic, when available.

Connections may be reached through 0917-5201155, 0917-5331155 or 8942894; fax 8151308, or e-mail mon.eugenio@gmail.com.



OVEN-ROASTED Chilean Sea Bass with Pumpkin Puree

Labor of love

Editor's note: The following is the fourth runner-up in the Doreen Gamboa Fernandez Food Writing 2004 contest.

By Christine Nunag

> Can women be more amazing than when they pursue the craft of cooking with passion and without compromise?

ING masakit kuanan, manyaman yang kanan. Hard to get, nice to eat.

Perhaps the Capampangan proverb could provide a clue to our best-kept cooking secrets.

As a child of three I had watched my mom work in our little kitchen in Pampanga. With mixed fear and amusement I saw her wrestle with live catfish, or sever the wings of crickety-crawly *camaru* (mole crickets) before turning them into *adobo*. I would wonder why, when cooking rice, she would place rock salt on the cover, or a *platito* (small plate) over the *sinaing* (cooked rice) when she thought it was dry and undercooked. And why her *paksing bangus* (milkfish cooked in vinegar) tasted better when she cooked it in that magical black *balanga*.

A similar clay pot was used by our beloved aunt, Indang Mareng, when dear mom passed away, to cook for us children her legendary *asado*. For that, I never saw our aunt use tomatoes from the can. Instead, she chopped fresh ones into a pulp then used those together with onions, garlic, bell pepper, *toyo* (soy sauce), calamansi (local lime), *bulung* laurel (bay leaf), and *samput-samput* (oregano) to stew her pork casim (shoulder).

Essence of timing

Years later, I met more amazing women and learned from them. My best friend's mother, Mommy Cely, taught me how to cook her delicious *adobong pusit* (braised squid). After cleaning out the squid's transparent backbone, its tentacles squeezed and unwanted parts expertly discarded, she let it briefly simmer in a blend of *sukang sasa* (palm vinegar), garlic, ground black pepper and salt. She then drained the meat and sautéed it in garlic, onion and tomatoes. As she carefully returned the sauce, she stressed the essence of timing in the gradual addition of liquid to any dish to reveal its natural *linamnam* (flavor).

"Don't stir when cooking with vinegar," she cautioned. "Or it will taste raw." As hints of oil in tomato-orange hues gently glistened over its purple sauce, the vinegary fragrance of this native calamari dish filled her spacious country kitchen.

Sharing the same sprawling backyard in a remote barrio by the foot of Mt. Arayat was Mommy Cely's sister, Auntie Glo. The day before her son's wedding, I saw this master cook supervise an assembly line of men and women peel, slice, chop ingredients, sharpen knives, wash pots and pans and build fires fed by wood on the ground in preparation for this very special occasion.

"This is bigger than your average fiesta," Auntie said to me.

ILLUSTRATION: ANTHONY MISTADES

Plucking feathers

Two weeks before the big day, Auntie bought 31 pieces of 45-day-old chicken (*bantres*) and fattened them in her own backyard. Those were for Auntie's definitive chicken barbecue.

Among the activities I watched was of a team of three who patiently stripped a bulky, towel-like heap of ox tripe of its undesirable layer before leaving it to boil in a giant *caldero* (pot). I squirmed as two boys gripped a hapless chicken by the throat, wings and feet while another slit the side of its neck, let its blood drip into a bowl, gave it a brisk cold wash, then dunked it head first in another *caldero* of scalding water. The rest swiftly plucked the feathers away.

But I contributed some work myself. Under a tamarind tree, we began sautéing chicken meat in garlic, white onion, grated *ange* (turmeric) and fish sauce in a cast iron *taliyasi* (vat). Then we poured in our manually grated, freshly squeezed coconut milk.

"With electric graters," Auntie explained, "milk gets wasted because the liquid shoots out in the process."

We then washed, drained and added the uncooked *lakatan* rice, the main ingredient in our *biringhi* (rice dish), and proceeded to cook, keeping the fire low by shifting and rearranging the live coals beneath. Covered with banana leaves, Auntie occasionally peeked in to see if the dish had reached perfect dryness and consistency.

Rich ensemble

In the afternoon, we moved on to the Embutido. Meticulously sliced carrots and bell pepper, chopped onions, grated cheddar cheese, flour, margarine, ground pepper, raisins, sweet pickles and salt were all added to a *batya* (basin) of ground pork *pigue* (rump) and *chorizo de bilbao* (Spanish sausage). Together we cracked four dozen eggs and tossed their yolks into the mix. Naturally, only Auntie Glo's bare hands were allowed to work on this rich, massive ensemble. She then laid scoops into sheets of aluminum foil cut into squares and let me roll some.

Hours later, all the chicken for the barbecue had been cut, cleaned and marinated in a generous sauce blend of soy sauce, garlic, sugar, ground pepper, salt and *calamansi*. The *biringhi* was ready for tomorrow's trimmings of sliced hard-boiled eggs and bell pepper strips. The *embutido* rolls were all perfectly steamed. It was only the ox tripe—which Auntie Glo would later turn into Callos—that still sat on the fire. But there was no hurry.

All these women cooked in a slow and arduous manner. I have come to do the same. These women also clearly engaged in the craft of cooking for one thing. And that was love.

A merry season for thieves, too

THE CONSUMER

Marietta Velasco Giron

THAT was no joke when it was reported that Rep. Francis Escudero's wallet was picked while he was inside the National Penitentiary (or "*bilibid* prison" as it is commonly called) in Muntinlupa on a fact-finding mission. His wallet was later found in a flowerpot, divested of cash, but naturally.

It is a glaring sign of the times, a timely reminder for us to pray and wish there will be less crime this coming year. One look at the newspaper pages shows clearly that robbery of all kinds is high on the list of crimes this season.

Here's one very recent report we can add to the list. A few days ago, *balikbayan* Teresa Oanes Carruthers was on the escalator of Landmark when her wallet was picked from her handbag. In the wallet were her credit cards, driver's license and about P30,000 cash. Luckily, her travel documents and other valuables were in another compartment.

Needless to say, the trauma of encountering pickpockets, as well as the loss of hard-earned cash and the hassle of replacing the lost credit cards, spoiled the *balikbayan*'s vacation.

We talked with Landmark's security officer, code named "JPT," and found out some interesting, nay disturbing, facts about the modus operandi of mall thieves.

According to him, there are two kinds of mall thieves. Each group has three to four members known in the underworld jargon as the *bakeros* (they distract a victim and surround him/her to block movement), and the *tirador* (he/she picks the valuables by slashing or opening the victim's bag or pocket). The *tirador* immediately hands over the loot to the *bakeros* so he/she is not caught red-handed if the victim realizes what happened. Similarly, the *bakeros* take turns handling the loot as they make their exit.

Another group, the *salisi* gang, attacks when the victim is distracted, like while he/she is eating at the food court. They steal the victim's bag while his/her attention is focused elsewhere.

Another group, the pickpocket (or pickbag, cutpurse, *mandurukot*), operates in crowded sites, usually the escalator or elevator. They also distract the victim's attention by dropping things like coins, headphones or cellular phones. When the victim bends to help pick up or even just looks at the dropped object, the *tirador* goes into action. In the meantime, the *bakeros* block the movement of the victim or further distract his/her attention.

Preventing mall thefts

Landmark's security officer gives the following tips to shoppers:

- Always put your bag in front of you wherever you are in the mall. Shield it with your arms if you are in a crowded place.
- Don't flaunt your jewelry/valuables so you don't become a target of thieves.
- Be on the alert when you are on the escalator and at the food court. These are favorite hunting grounds of robbers.
- As much as possible, don't withdraw big amounts from the automated teller machines (ATMs) in crowded malls.

The security officer gives this final advice to shoppers: "If you catch the thief red-handed, shout at the top of your voice (if you're at Landmark, that is) so the security guards can be alerted. Our guards are specially trained for this situation."

To our readers: Stay safe and happy. Merry Christmas everybody!

E-mail comments and complaints to mgiron@i-manila.com.ph.

Apple strudel, 'atbp.' for Christmas

GIVE a Ritz apple strudel this holiday season.

The apple strudels, which gave the coffee shop its name, consist of layers of spongy sliced apples, crispy filo pastry sheets, fresh cream, and creamy light custard. It has the the right sweetness and flakiness.

Ritz strudels are also available in mango, peach, strawberry and kiwi, and in various sizes: slice (for one to two persons), half (three to four) and full (six to 10).

Aside from strudel, Ritz Apple Strudel also has chocolate cream puff, mini custard, frutti puff, four seasons, among others.

Ritz Apple Strudel serves its own house coffee blend to complement the pastries.

Ritz Apple Strudel and Pastry shops are at G/F, Madison Square, Ortigas Avenue, North Greenhills, San Juan; G/F, Shangri-La Plaza Shopping Mall, Mandaluyong; Lower G/F The Podium, Mandaluyong; Food Choices, 3/L Greenbelt 3, Ayala Center Makati.

No-cooking Noche Buena

From page D1

canapés by the dozen.

Someone sent me a text message two weeks ago wanting to know where to get gingerbread houses. The Mandarin has them. Call 7508888.

- If you crave Strawberry Shortcake, call my student Gwen Uy. She makes them two ways, with lemon or the good old-fashioned way. Looks big and impressive, too. Call or text 0917-5261668. Gwen is leaving soon to pursue her dream of being a chef.

I wish you all the best! Good luck and do me proud!

- Barrio Fiesta! Isn't that a blast from the past? Double-knit and gabardine have gone out of fashion but some things have stood the test of time, like the house that Crispy Pata built!

About two weeks ago, our *Manang* goofed and forgot to serve my brother, *Manong* Boy the *pata* he ordered for his guests. Thank God for this major disaster. We ended up eating Barrio Fiesta's Crispy Pata.

I've completely forgotten how delicious it is. Even the leftover that was kept in the freezer tasted so good when refried.

Have you tried Barrio Fiesta's *adobo* in liver sauce? That's another yummy Barrio original. I had to call Cora Tamayo to ask what they had for Christmas and I was given a whole party tray menu. All the delicious comfort foods that Barrio has fed us for years are now available in Party Trays that are enough for 15-20 persons. Call 726-7562 or 7267836.

CHEF J Gamboa

Ham-tired

Every year, I am stuck with the same way of preparing ham. I am tired of slicing and heating it up and putting it on *pan de sal* every Christmas. Please help! Merry Christmas!

MARGIE CRUZ,
MAKATI

I agree that your ham needs a major makeover! Here is one way to make your ham different this year. This one recipe can have many variations.

And, Ms Cruz, *salamat po* for appreciating what I do. It is always a pleasure to share the little that I know and a piece of myself with you!

I like using honey ham with a layer of fat for this recipe. If you don't have honey ham, any ham will do.

- Marinate in fruit juice of choice for six hours. (orange, apple, pineapple, mango, grapefruit, lychee, pear, peach, guava. etc.). Make sure the ham is covered with the juice or at least half of the ham is submerged in juice. If the juice is not enough, marinate one side of the ham for three hours, turning it over to marinate the other side.
- Drain the fruit juice but set it aside.
- Pre-heat oven to 350°F.
- Score top of ham into diamonds and stud center of each diamond with a clove. Place ham on a rack in a roasting pan and bake for an hour. Use the lowest oven rack. Brush with fruit juice every 15 minutes.
- Remove ham from oven and brush top, fat side up, with Dijon Mustard. Sprinkle top generously with brown sugar, making a "sugar crust" on top of ham. Make sure to press/pat sugar down to make it adhere to mustard coat.

You may want to add a teaspoon of all-spice to the sugar before sprinkling for flavor.

- Bake for another 20-30 minutes.
- In a saucepan, heat up 1/3 cup of butter. Add 1 cup +/- sugar (adjust to taste) and the fruit juice, about 3-4 cups. Season the sauce with salt and pepper. Adjust sugar, salt and pepper to taste
- Another standard ham sauce is mustard and maple syrup. Mix 1/3 cup of Dijon Mustard and 1/2 cup honey. Season sauce with salt and pepper. Serve with ham
- Garnish ham with fresh fruits and greens, sauce and serve with more *pan de sal* if you wish

Merry Christmas!

For questions, comments or suggestions, text 0917-8399888.

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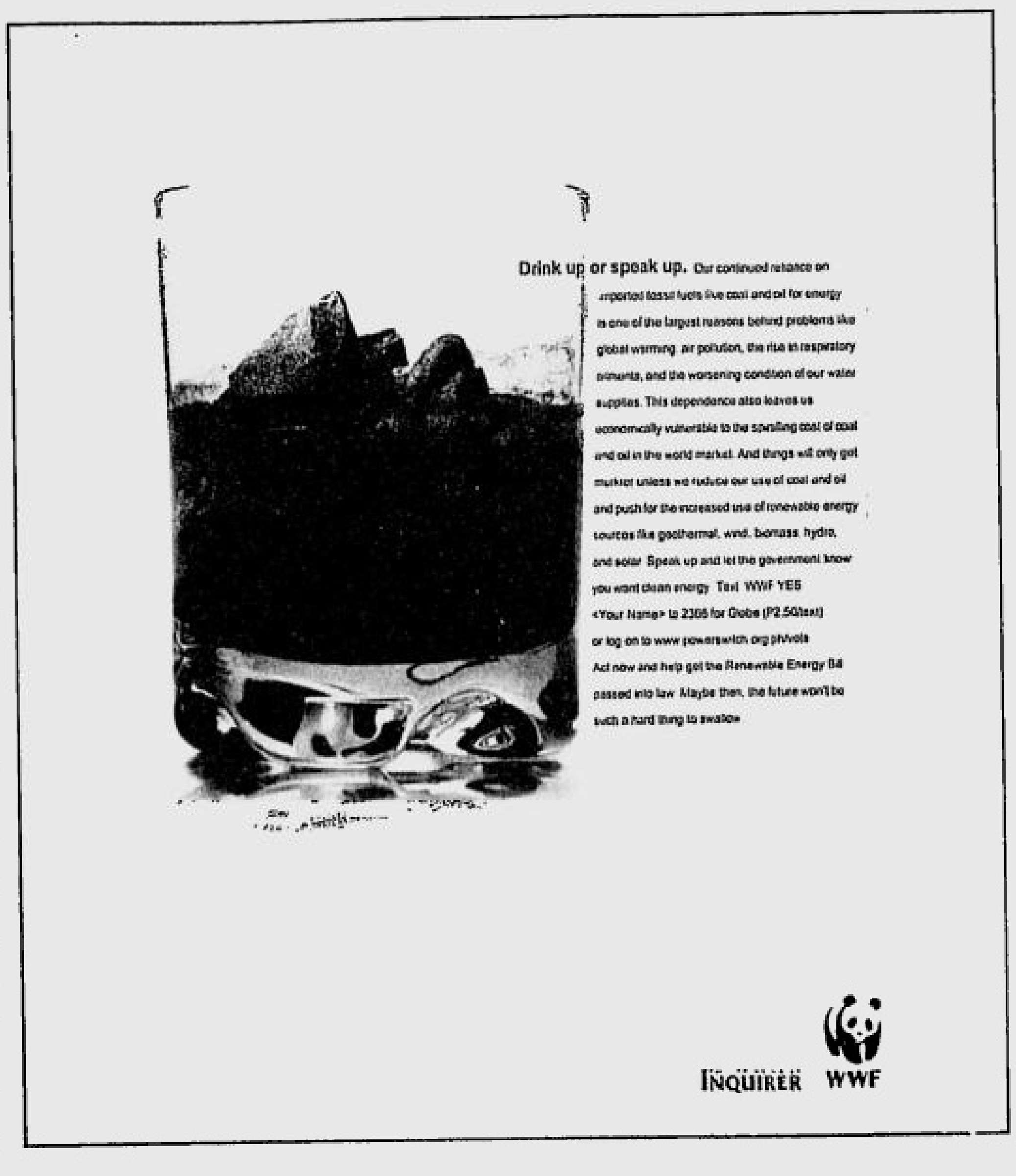
Drink up or speak up. Our continued reliance on imported fossil fuels like coal and oil for energy is one of the largest reasons behind problems like global warming, air pollution, the rise in respiratory ailments, and the worsening condition of our water supplies. This dependence also leaves us economically vulnerable to the spiralling cost of coal and oil in the world market. And things will only get murkier unless we reduce our use of coal and oil and push for the increased use of renewable energy sources like geothermal, wind, biomass, hydro, and solar. Speak up and let the government know you want clean energy. Text WWF YES <Your Name> to 2306 for Globe (P2.50/text) or log on to www.powerswitch.org.ph/vote Act now and help get the Renewable Energy Bill passed into law. Maybe then, the future won't be such a hard thing to swallow.
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CAROLS from the multi-awarded Philippine Children's choir

Double Yuletide shopping fun with haggling and prizes

MARKET! Market! is giving its shoppers this Christmas season the best buys in the metropolis, with an opportunity to haggle to boot!

Affordable finds, the freshest fruits and vegetables, bargain goods, sumptuous food, cool gadgets, novelty items—this super value mall has it all.

And to make it a truly satisfying shopping experience, Market! Market! offers its most loyal shoppers a special promo, "*Pasko na, suki ko!*" Each time a shopper makes a P300 single or accumulated purchase in any of Market! Market!'s regular retail stores or Metro Market! Market! and Food Choices, she is given a chance to win instant Christmas treats. Prizes at stake are ham, *queso de bola*, one kilo of fruits, one kilo of rice, shopping bag, Timezone cards and cinema passes. Promo participants can pick a prize coupon from the Promo Box, with a maximum of five coupons a day.

The latest retail innovation from Ayala Land Inc. recently held a free concert to officially mark the Yuletide season with no less than its "*suki*" Ogie Alcasid leading the early Christmas party.

Alcasid hosted the affair and performed several Christmas songs, much to the delight of the crowd that gathered at the activity area. The Philippine Children's Choir, which won the silver medal in the children's category and the bronze medal in the contemporary music category at the 2nd World Choir Olympics in Busan, Korea, also performed. They also happen to be the first Filipino choir to win at the International Choral Competition in British Columbia.

To make it a truly Pinoy Christmas, *parol* in the most vibrant hues surrounded the activity area. Displayed at hallway ceilings were Christmas lanterns made of *anahaw* from Bicol and *kiping* from Quezon in holiday colors.

From fresh fruits and vegetables to bargain goods, favorite foods and novelty items, Market! Market has it all

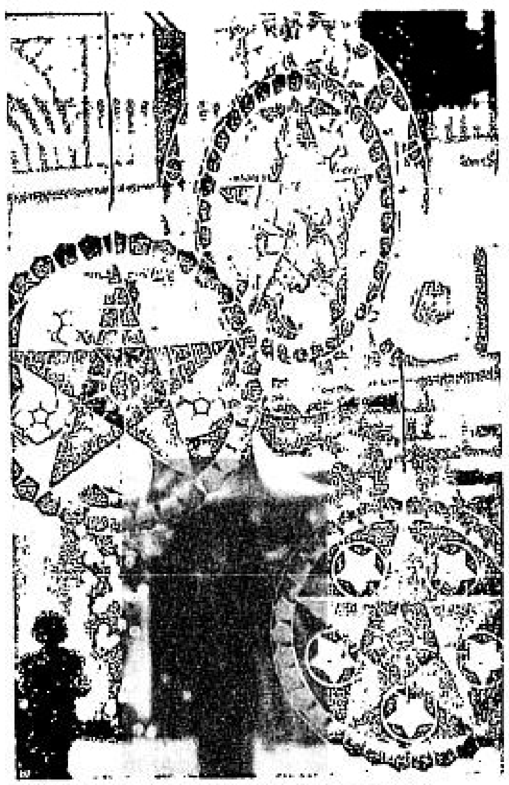
OGIE Alcasid sings some best-loved Christmas songs for the Market! Market! crowd

The Christmas capital of the Philippines, Pampanga, fittingly took its place at the dome with giant balls and lanterns made of capiz materials, sourced from Roxas City and some parts of the Visayas region, Bicol, and Bataan. The lanterns and balls were created by New York-based Pinoy designer Daniel de la Cruz, and will be the New York Christmas colors for the 2005 season.

From Mindoro comes the ingenious rattan lanterns and *buri* tassle baskets made by the Alangan Mangyans of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro. The province of Aurora created a unique star-shaped lantern from assorted nuts, such as the banaba, traditionally used for medical purposes, *pandan* fruit and the *agoho* small pine cone.

For this starry, starry Christmas, Market! Market! is observing the following shopping hours: Dec. 23: 10 a.m.-12 mn; Dec. 24: 10 a.m.-8 p.m.; Dec. 25 and Jan. 1: 12 nn-8 p.m.; Dec. 26-30: Regular mall hours; Dec. 31: 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

Market! Market! is located in Bonifacio Global City, Taguig, it can be reached by car, jeepney, FX or bus. A full-service transport terminal is available for shoppers' convenience.



PAMPANGA province created colorful lanterns made of *capiz* materials.

THE PROVINCE of Aurora created a unique star-shaped lantern especially for Market! Market!'s Christmas décor.

CHRISTMAS lanterns made of *anahaw* materials in red, green , and yellow colors from Bicol

San Mig Cafe
Super Instant 3-in-1 Coffee Mix
Bagay sa taste mo!
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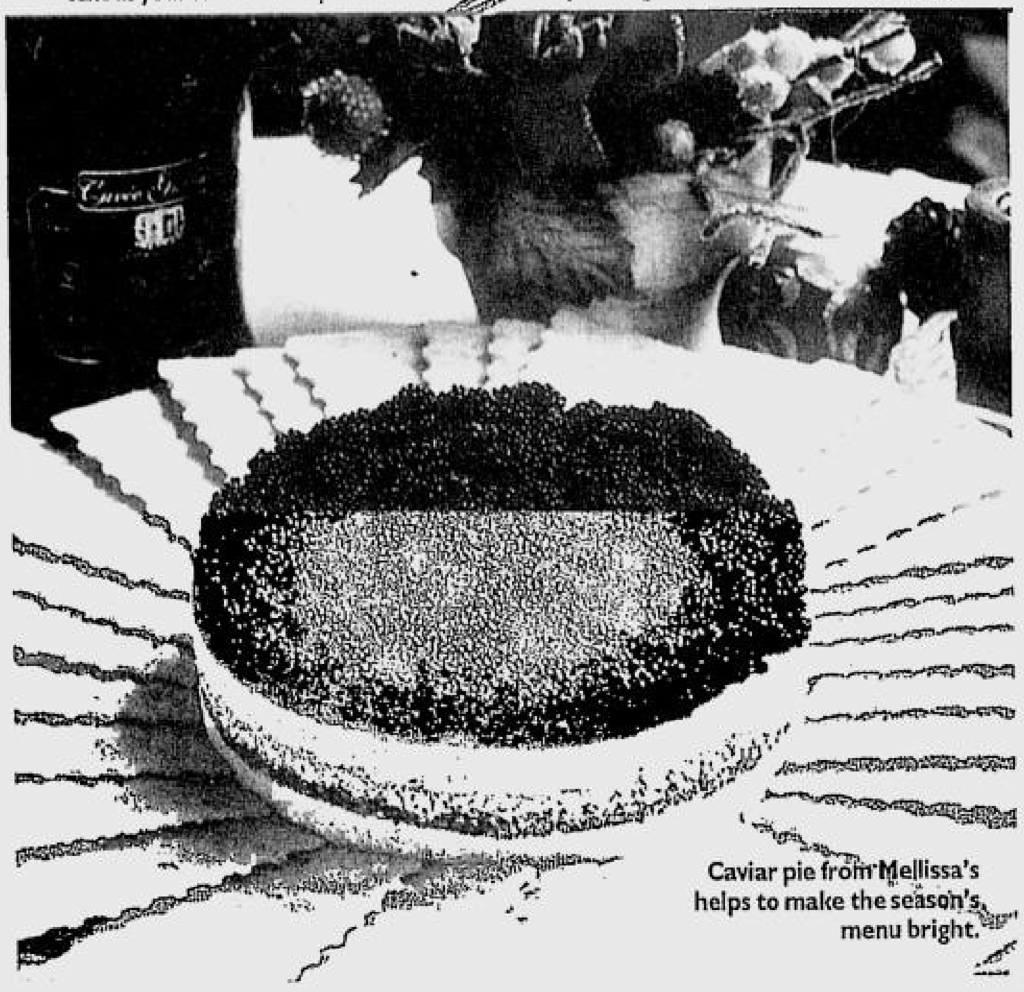

Caviar pie from Mellissa's helps to make the season's menu bright.

Add a touch of luxury to Noche Buena

Add a classy caviar pie to your holiday spread and make this Christmas more memorable for the foodies in the family and even for guests who have not tried caviar before.

Mellissa's Caviar Pie (tels. 8526971/0910-3803743) has a sweet buttery, rich, complex flavor with a smooth and silky texture. It is best eaten within three days and should always be refrigerated. Never put it in the freezer. Metal, including silver, should not be used in serving the pie so as not to affect the taste. It is best to use spoons made of bone, tortoise shell or mother of pearl.

Though caviar pie is traditionally served during the Christmas season, it can be enjoyed throughout the year as an hors d'oeuvre. Serve caviar with frozen vodka or a very dry Champagne or sparkling wine. In a pinch, a dry white wine will do.

Mellissa's Caviar Pie is available in three sizes—small (4 inches) for P890, medium (6 inches) for P1,690, and large (9 inches) for P2,490. Order at least a day ahead.

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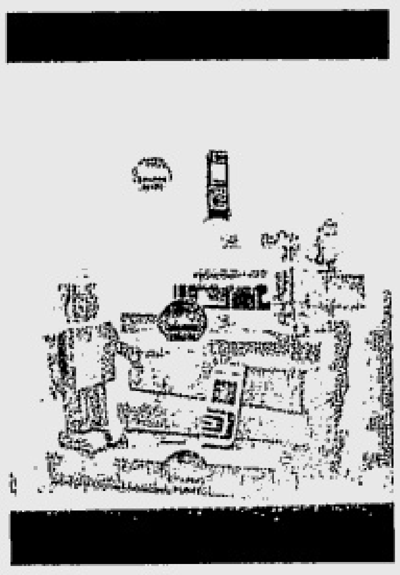
The Hub Greenbelt Unveils Holiday Window of Fashion Phones



Toledo and Vijandre's design highlight technology vis-a-vis the importance of tradition

Window-shopping takes on a whole new meaning as the Hub by Globe Telecom presents its 2004 Holiday Windows of Style and Innovation. Rendered by some of the country's most creative minds in art and design, the project crystallizes the HUB message to "Be Joyous" alongside a technology theme that highlights the newest mobile phones.

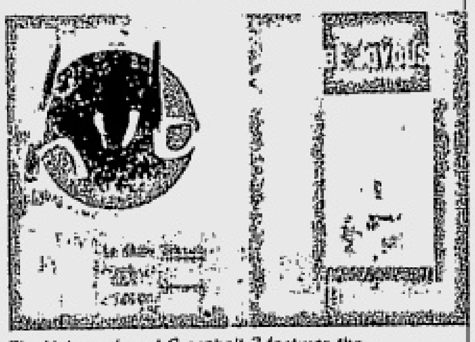
The store window is probably the most important medium in enticing customers to enter and shop in the store. As the Holiday Season is a very important time for retailing, the "HUB Holiday Window's of Style and Innovation" builds on the store window as the key element in showcasing mobile products in a Christmas inspired theme. One can take a peek at the latest and upcoming phones through the Hub windows.

For the Hub in Greenbelt 3, designers Ricky Toledo and Chito Vijandre fused the old and the new as they referenced tradition with modernity.

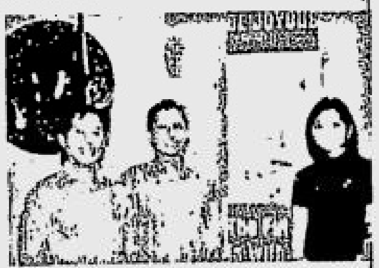
Old books painted white are arranged like steps. On stands, one will see the featured Nokia Fashion Phones-the 7260, 7270 and 7280, showcased amidst a pin-lighted background. A trio of robots painted white stands on alert as a rotating mirrored ball hovers above.

The robots are iconic figures of everything that excites us and we dread, about the future of computer technology. As toys, they are always the most popular Christmas gifts for children.

Firma's Ricky Tolentino and Chit Vijandre unveil their design for the Hub Greenbelt 3



The Hub window at Greenbelt 3 features the new fashion phones from Nokia



Chito Vijandre, Ricy Toledo and Luanne Erni of Nokia

With the featured Nokia phones -7260, 7270, 7280-the future is already upon us.

The Nokia 7260, sleek and dashing with silvery art deco highlights, has an integrated VGA camera and FM radio, a voice recorder, and flash messaging. It may boggle some, but for the true fashionista, a clothing and shoe-size converter comes in handy.

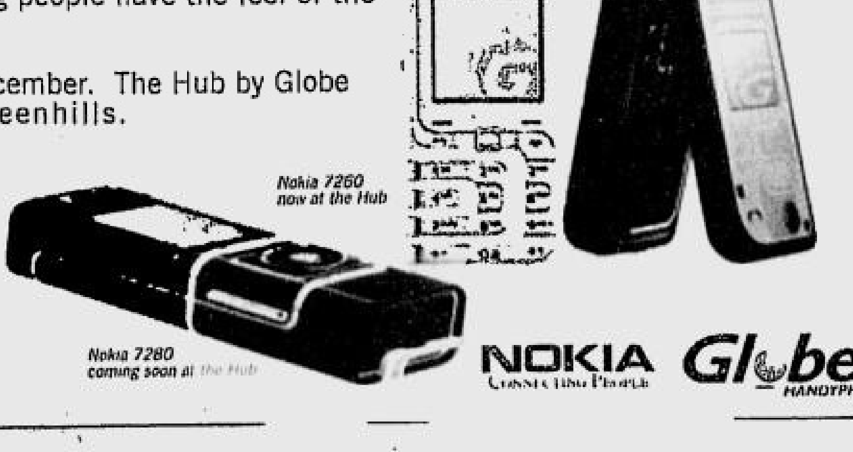
The elegant Nokia 7270 has an innovative fold, two-color display camera and video player/recorder, and a push-to-talk functionality. It comes with its own wardrobe of snap-on textile wraps so you can dress it up to match your mood-sexy, sweet, naughty or nice.

The "mysterious" Nokia 7280, which flashes like a flame in the dark, is ideal for the night prowler. You slide it open to reveal the exquisite beauty of its craftsmanship and design, which features a cunningly hidden integrated VGA camera, a display screen with a unique red glow and the latest trick, a unique rotator to access features.

The Hub is not just a gallery for viewing the latest mobile phones and Globe technology. It is also a pioneer in technology retailing that taps into a multi-sensory experience. It's not just about looking hi-tech. At the Hub, one can touch and tinker with the gadgets.

"Some people are averse to new products because they don't experience it," observes Raya Roa-Gonzalez, Head of Retail Marketing and VIP Partnerships of Globe Telecom. The Hub dispels this wariness by letting people have the feel of the technology.

The Hub Holiday Windows of Style and Innovation will be on view for the entire month of December. The Hub by Globe Telecom has stores at Greenbelt 3, Glorietta 4, Rockwell, Podium and Greenhills.



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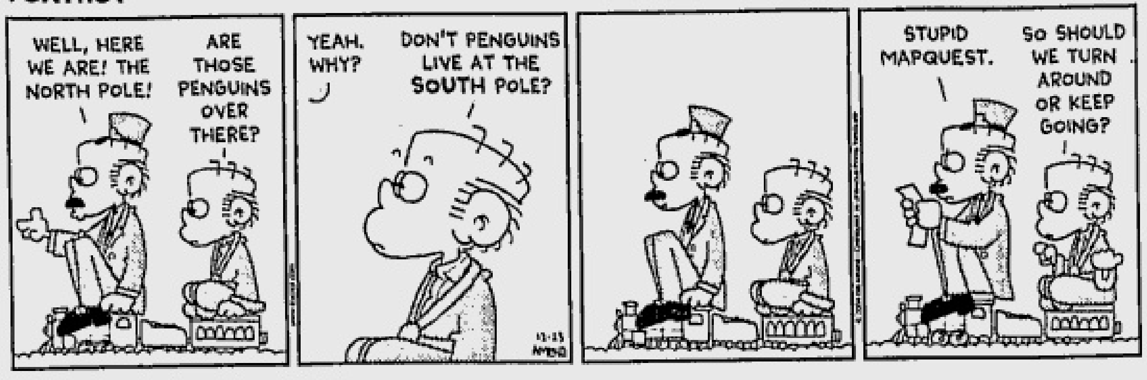
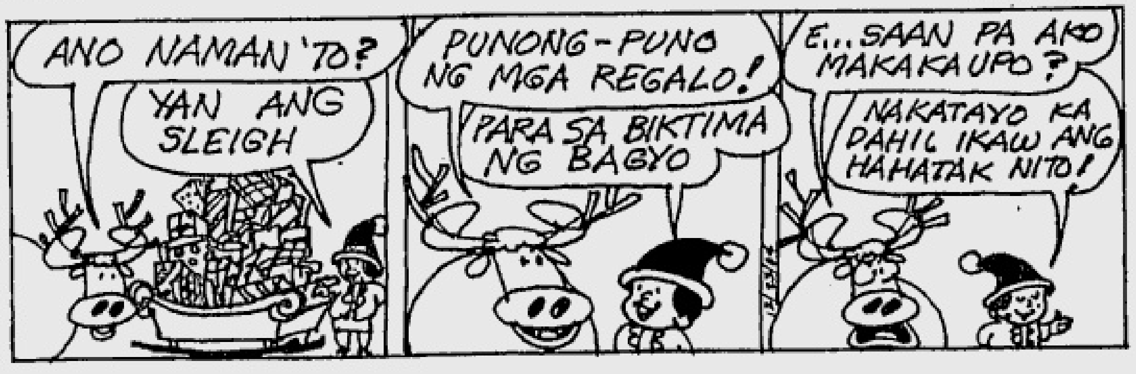
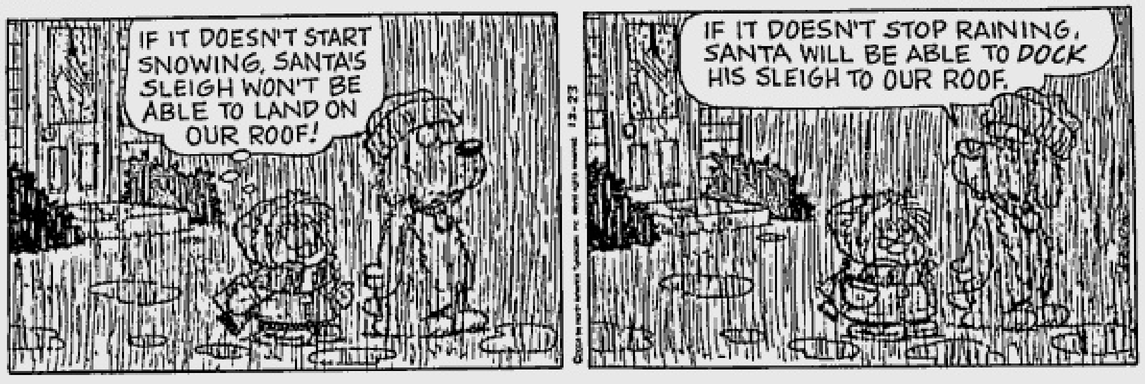
FOXTROT BY BILL AMEND


WELL, HERE WE ARE! THE NORTH POLE!
ARE THOSE PENGUINS OVER THERE?
YEAH. WHY?
DON'T PENGUINS LIVE AT THE SOUTH POLE?
STUPID MAPQUEST.
SO SHOULD WE TURN AROUND OR KEEP GOING?

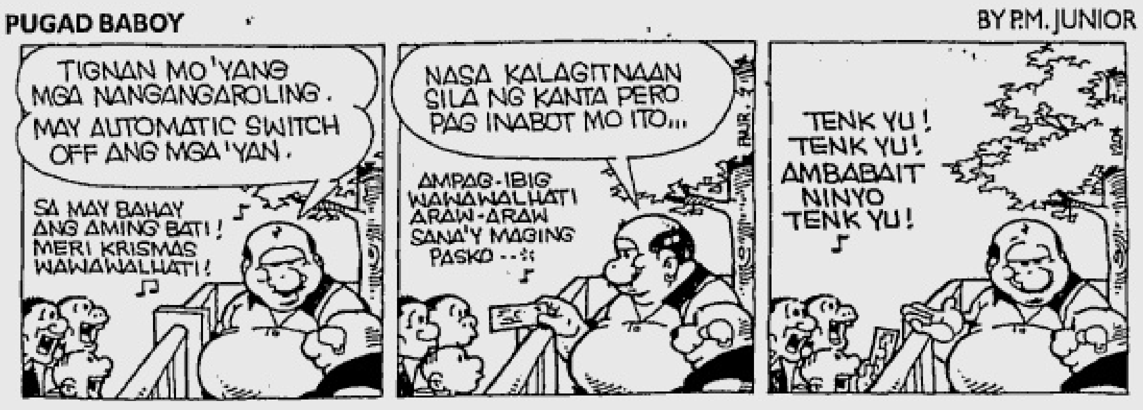
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


ANO NAMAN 'TO?
YAN ANG SLEIGH
PUNONG-PUNO NG MGA REGALO!
PARA SA BIKTIMA NG BAGYO
E... SAAN PA AKO MAKAKAUPO?
NAKATAYO KA DAHIL IKAW ANG HAHATAK NITO!

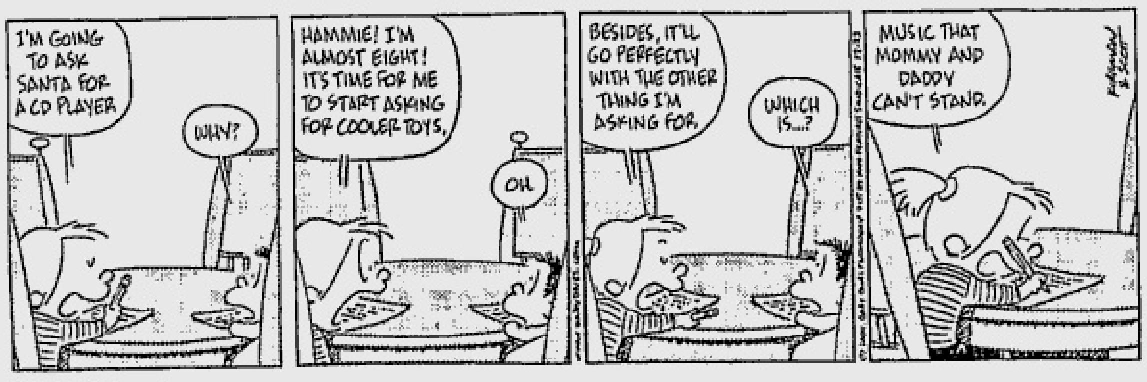
MARVIN BY TOM ARMSTRONG


IF IT DOESN'T START SNOWING, SANTA'S SLEIGH WON'T BE ABLE TO LAND ON OUR ROOF!
IF IT DOESN'T STOP RAINING, SANTA WILL BE ABLE TO DOCK HIS SLEIGH TO OUR ROOF.

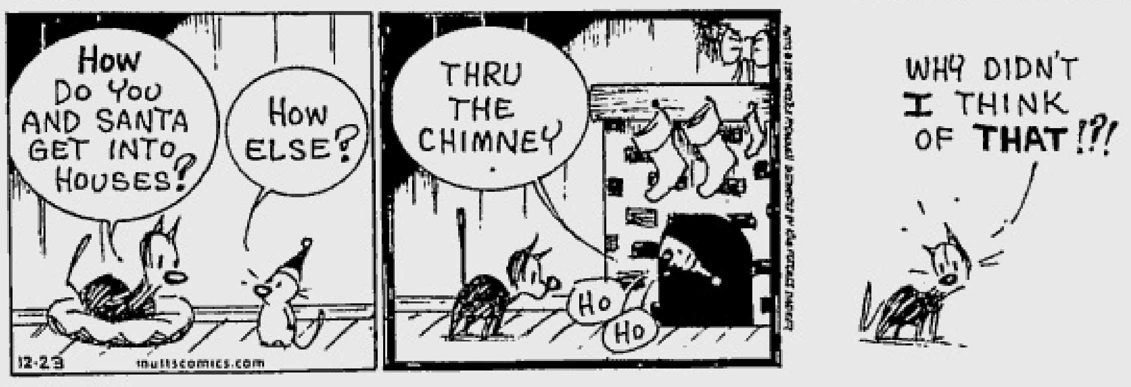
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


TIGNAN MO 'YANG MGA NANGANGAROLING.
MAY AUTOMATIC SWITCH OFF ANG MGA 'YAN.
SA MAY BAHAY ANG AMING BATI! MERI KRISMAS WAWAWALHATI!
NASA KALAGITNAAN SILA NG KANTA PERO PAG INABOT MO ITO...
AMPAG-IBIG WAWAWALHATI ARAW-ARAW SANA'Y MAGING PASKO...
TENK YU! TENK YU! AMBABAIT NINYO TENK YU!

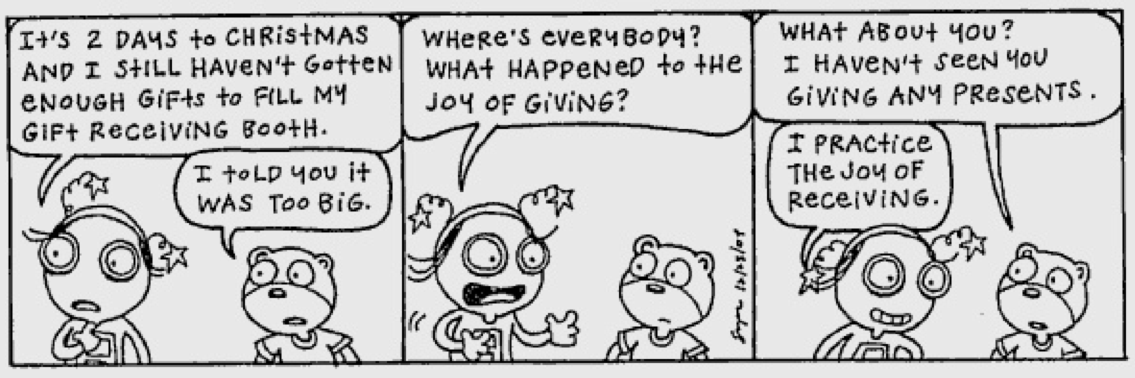
BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


I'M GOING TO ASK SANTA FOR A CD PLAYER
WHY?
HAMMIE! I'M ALMOST EIGHT! IT'S TIME FOR ME TO START ASKING FOR COOLER TOYS.
OH.
BESIDES, IT'LL GO PERFECTLY WITH THE OTHER THING I'M ASKING FOR.
WHICH IS...?
MUSIC THAT MOMMY AND DADDY CAN'T STAND.

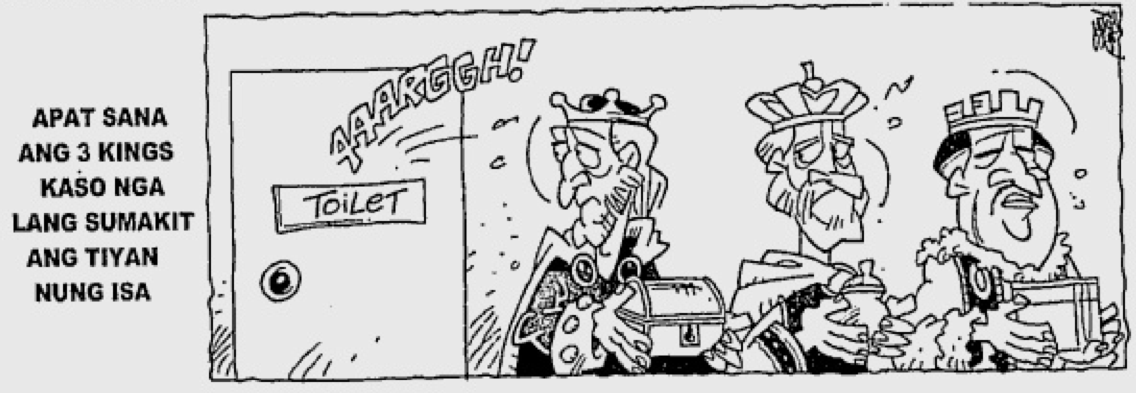
MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


How Do You AND SANTA GET INTO HOUSES?
How ELSE?
THRU THE CHIMNEY
Ho
Ho
WHY DIDN'T I THINK OF THAT!?!
12-23
muttscomics.com

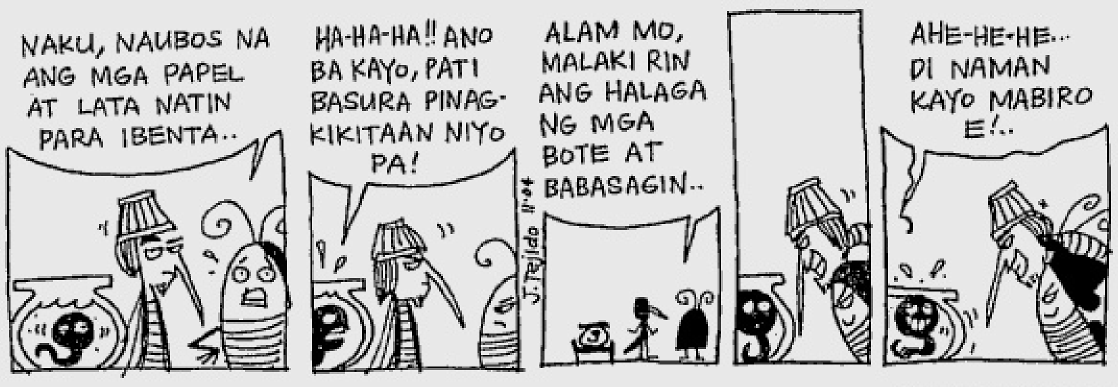
ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


IT'S 2 DAYS TO CHRISTMAS AND I STILL HAVEN'T GOTTEN ENOUGH GIFTS TO FILL MY GIFT RECEIVING BOOTH.
I TOLD YOU IT WAS TOO BIG.
WHERE'S EVERYBODY? WHAT HAPPENED TO THE JOY OF GIVING?
WHAT ABOUT YOU? I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU GIVING ANY PRESENTS.
I PRACTICE THE JOY OF RECEIVING.

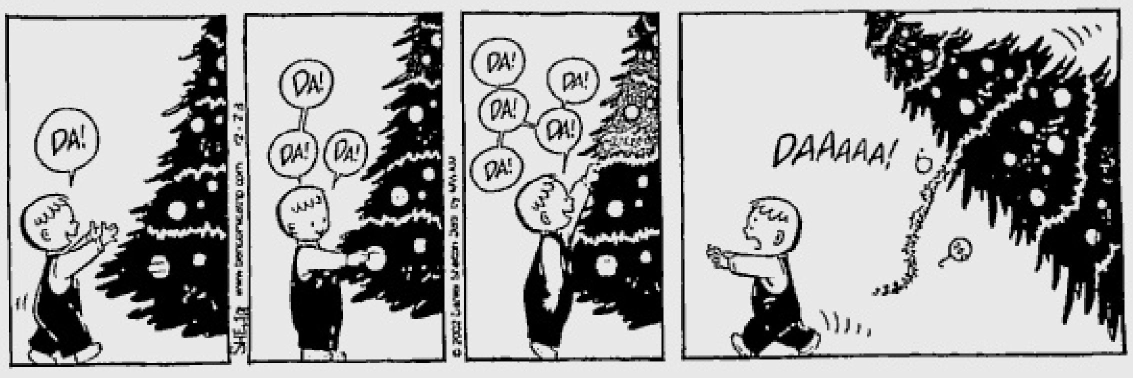
DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS


APAT SANA ANG 3 KINGS KASO NGA LANG SUMAKIT ANG TIYAN NUNG ISA
AAARGGH!
TOILET

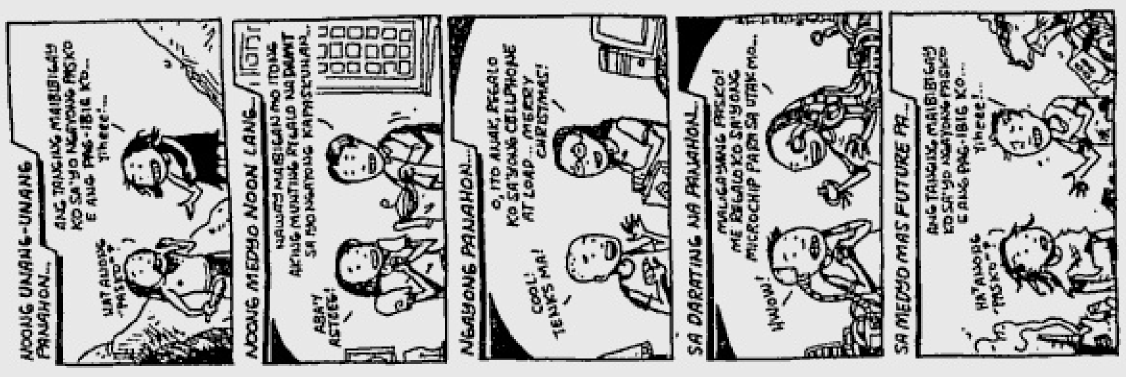
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


NAKU, NAUBOS NA ANG MGA PAPEL AT LATA NATIN PARA IBENTA..
HA-HA-HA!! ANO BA KAYO, PATI BASURA PINAGKIKITAAN NIYO PA!
ALAM MO, MALAKI RIN ANG HALAGA NG MGA BOTE AT BABASAGIN..
AHE-HE-HE.. DI NAMAN KAYO MABIRO E!..

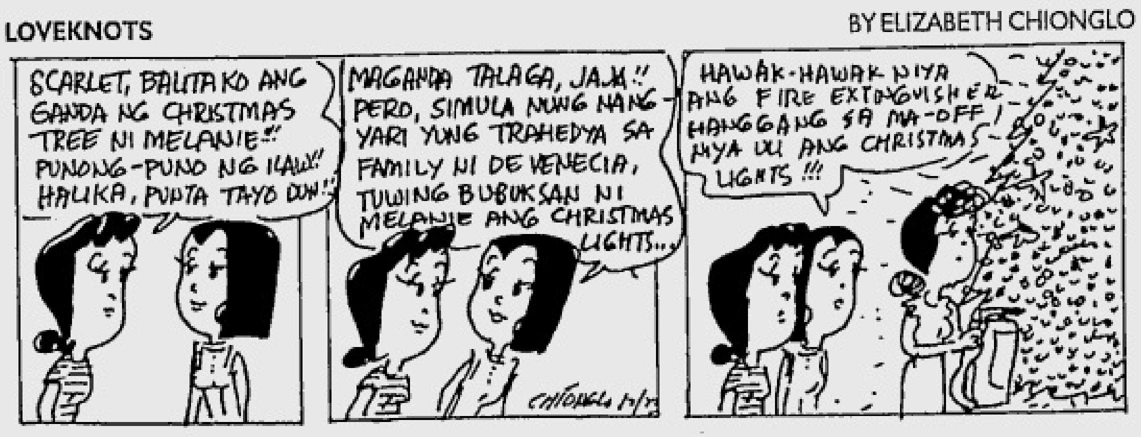
BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


DA!
DA!
DA!
DA!
DA!
DA!
DA!
DA!
DA!
DAAAAA!

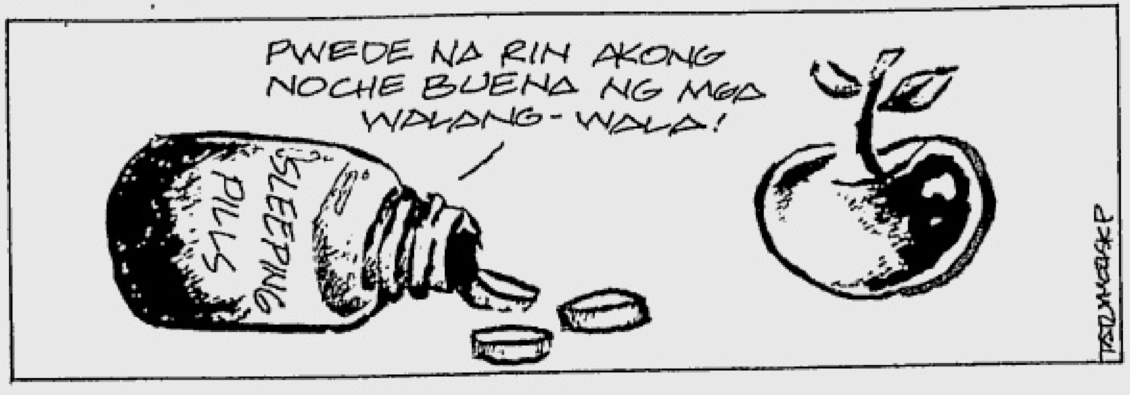
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


NOONG UNANG-UNANG PANAHON...
NOONG MEDYO NOON LANG...
ABA'Y ASTEEG!
NGAYONG PANAHON...
O, ITO ANAK, REGALO KO SA'YONG CELLPHONE AT LOAD... MERRY CHRISTMAS!
COOL! TENKS MA!
SA DARATING NA PANAHON...
WOW!
SA MEDYO MAS FUTURE PA...

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


SCARLET, BALITA KO ANG GANDA NG CHRISTMAS TREE NI MELANIE!! PUNONG-PUNO NG ILAW!! HALIKA, PUNTA TAYO DUN!!
MAGANDA TALAGA, JAJA!! PERO, SIMULA NUNG NANGYARI YUNG TRAHEDYA SA FAMILY NI DE VENECIA, TUWING BUBUKSAN NI MELANIE ANG CHRISTMAS LIGHTS...
HAWAK-HAWAK NIYA ANG FIRE EXTINGUISHER HANGGANG SA MA-OFF NIYA NA ANG CHRISTMAS LIGHTS!!!

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


PWEDE NA RIN AKONG NOCHE BUENA NG MGA WALANG-WALA!
SLEEPING PILLS

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: People like you because you're easygoing, good-natured and reliable. You don't take your responsibilities lightly. You deliver what you promise. You're strongly independent and have your own way of doing things. You definitely act on your dreams. Expect a social, fun-loving year ahead! All relationships are blessed.

Birthdate of: Robert Bly, poet/teacher; Yousuf Karsh, photographer; Susan Lucci, TV soap actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): The most important thing for you to do now is to secure your home base. You need to establish an anchor for yourself in the world.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You gave up much in the middle '90s. Last year was and this year will be a time of change. Many of you will make a residential move or change jobs—or both!

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): In 2001, you entered a new sandbox. Since then, you've been trying to figure out who you are and what to do. But first establish a value system you can trust.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Since 2000, you have given up a lot. Now you're in a new phase of your life. Everything having to do with family and real estate will continue to wonderfully improve!

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): At this point in your life, you have to learn to give up what you no longer need. Say goodbye to clothing, furniture, jobs and even people to vote on their usefulness.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You can expect to earn more money this year. (And you'll be spending it as well.) This month you might buy something attractive for where you live.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Lucky Jupiter (in your sign for the next year) makes life far easier for you. Expect good fortune, opportunities and gifts to come your way.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Since 1999, your life has taken a positive shift. (Of course, 1984 and 1991 were memorable years.) Success lies just ahead for you now.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Ever since 2001, you have been out of the gate and running! Right now, one of the things you want to prove is that you can make money.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): It's all about you now. Go right ahead and put yourself first. Sometimes (not often) you just have to do it. If you don't take care of yourself, you can't help anyone else.

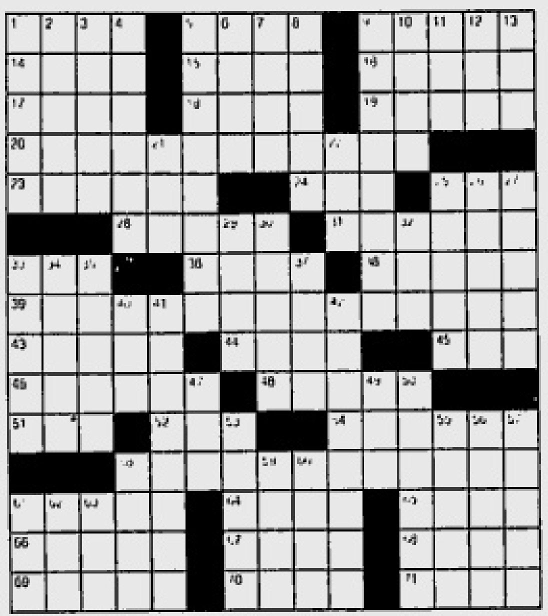
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Next year, you break free. All this hard work pays off. Finally, you will feel like you are in the game—you're a player.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Many goodies come to you this year. This is a great year to get a loan or a mortgage. You will definitely benefit from the wealth of others now.

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Jack of oaters
5 Electrical unit
9 Flight unit
14 Tra follower
15 Banned apple spray
16 Lively dance
17 Elevator man?
18 __-majesty
19 Narrow bay
20 Start of a scoffer's comment
23 Group of nine
24 Actor Mineo
25 CIA adversary, once
28 Extend a look
31 Argyle fixer
33 Kaline and Rosen
36 Press down tightly
38 Actress Davis
39 Part 2 of comment
43 Bellowing
44 Delhi dress
45 __ Moines, IA
46 Post-sunset rainfall
48 Cassia family plant
51 Devon river
52 Dance in France
54 Hawn of "Cactus Flower"
58 End of comment
61 Brother of Moses
64 Fixed in place
65 Guidelines
66 Ordinary writing
67 Additional
68 Caesar's being
69 Speed contests
70 Nolan or Meg
71 Solidifies

DOWN
1 Wed on the run
2 "Little __ Lupe Lu"
3 Straighten up
4 Large groups
5 Confirm
6 Designer Cassini
7 Tie with a rope
8 Waste allowances
9 Amount wasted
10 Singer Bennett
11 Everyone
12 Eisenhower
13 Rodent pest
21 Picture border
22 Craze
25 Delivered a low blow?
26 Art grouping
27 Donkey cries
29 Skates
30 Thompson and Samms
32 N.T. book
33 Humiliate
34 Trademark yarn
35 Mall element
37 Remove a peel
40 Possess like a Scotsman
41 Defenders of public rights
42 "Louie, Louie" singers
47 Seize suddenly
49 San Francisco hill
50 "__ Restaurant"
53 Prisoner forever
55 Lebanese militia
56 That is: Lat.
57 Zigzag turns
58 Radiation count
59 Unctuous
60 Heavenly bear
61 Financing fig.
62 Coach Parseghian
63 Fierce mythical bird



By Roger Coburn
Summerville, GA

12/23/04

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

B	R	I	A	H	■	B	L	A	B	■	P	E	S	O
E	E	R	I	E	■	E	A	S	E	■	A	G	A	R
S	W	O	R	D	I	N	T	H	E	S	T	O	N	E
I	A	N	S	■	D	E	T	E	N	T	E	■	■	■
D	R	E	■	T	A	T	E	■	■	U	N	B	A	R
E	D	D	A	S	■	■	■	C	A	N	T	I	N	A
■	■	■	C	A	P	I	T	A	L	■	■	N	T	H
■	T	H	E	R	A	Z	O	R	S	E	D	G	E	■
C	R	O	■	■	C	O	N	D	O	N	E	■	■	■
D	A	P	P	L	E	D	■	■	■	I	S	L	E	S
S	P	I	R	E	■	■	S	A	N	D	■	O	U	T
■	■	■	E	S	P	O	U	S	E	■	L	O	G	O
K	N	I	F	E	I	N	T	H	E	W	A	T	E	R
E	Y	R	E	■	A	C	R	E	■	I	R	E	N	E
W	E	A	R	■	S	E	A	N	■	N	A	R	E	S

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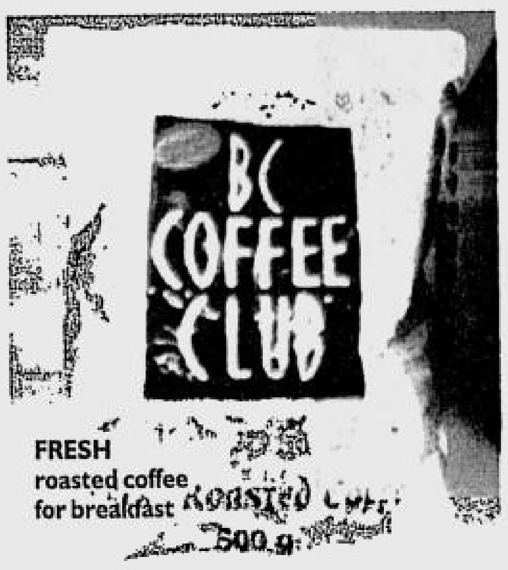
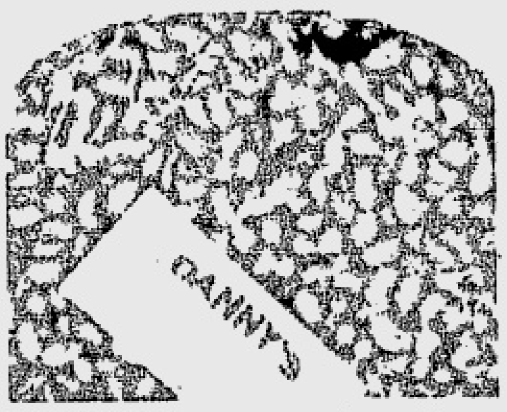
12/23/04

More than just 'barako' country



FRESH roasted coffee for breakfast



PANUCHA, or sweet peanuts, is one of Batangas' specialties.

SHOPPERS will likely find lots of great food finds at the newly opened SM Supermarket at SM City Batangas.

Batangueños, who are also known for their culinary skills, can now go to just one place to have practically everything they need for their favorite dishes—the freshest meat, seafood and vegetables; and a wide selection of grocery items. They can also join exciting promotions.

Also not to be missed is the supermarket's SM Bonus selection that offers alternative to high-quality products at significantly lower prices. Shoppers can save as much as 80 percent on some items, even get some items free at SM City Batangas.

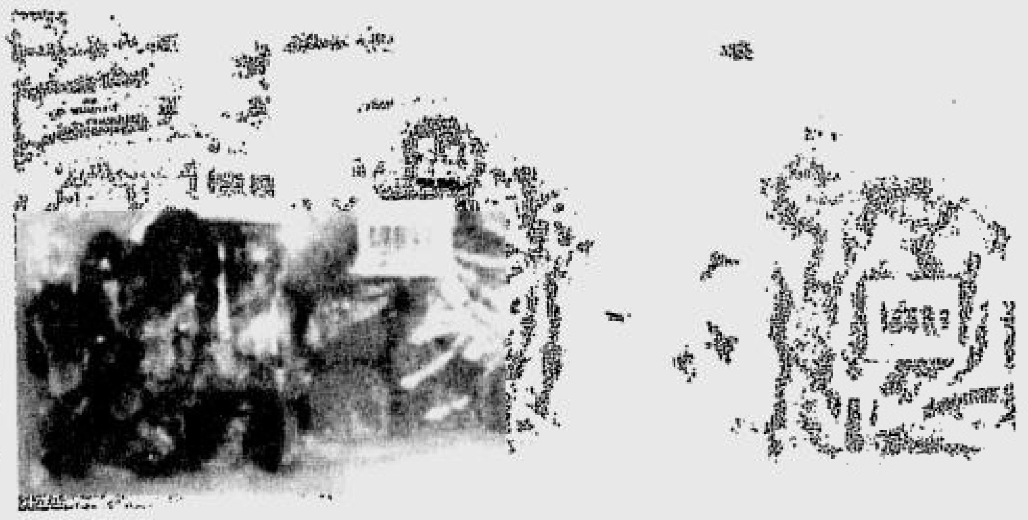
The supermarket showcases the best of Batangas: seafood and high-quality meat at very low prices. Homegrown specialties—*kapeng barako, bagoong balayan, panucha, macapuno* candies and Batangas special *tablea* (cocoa beans).

The supermarket's layout and well-trained staff make shopping convenient and enjoyable. On-going promos give shoppers the best value while having lots of fun.

Current promos include the Total Lower Cost (TLC) promotion that gives SM Advantage Card holders special discounts on grocery items, and TLC Fresh that gives customers great ideas on how to prepare food and enjoy savings from the fresh section.

SM Supermarket is at the G/L of SM City Batangas.

SM's Lawrence Calingasan, Rep. Hermilando Mandanas, Pastor Properties' Antonio Pastor, and SM Supermarket SVP for Marketing Herbert Sy



MACAPUNO candies

US resto chain opens flagship store

TACO Bell's flagship store opened recently at the Gateway Mall beside the Araneta Coliseum in Araneta Center.

Among those present during the event were Mexican Ambassador Enrique Hubbard Urrea and executives of Yum Restaurants International, parent company of Taco Bell International.

Yum managing director Art Rautio said the store was going to be the first of many in the Philippines. He noted Filipinos loved to eat and Taco Bell was offering them something different and healthier.

Actor Diether Ocampo, MTV VJ Marc Abaya and players of the Philippine Basketball Association, like Jeffrey Cariaso, made surprise appearances.

Also as part of the three-day celebration, a grand motorcade was held featuring Binibining Pilipinas beauties. Various games were also held. Actor Dingdong Dantes also showed up.

The Taco Bell Corp., a subsidiary of Yum! Brands, Inc., is the world's leading Mexican-style quick-service restaurant chain. It serves some 35 million customers each week in more than 6,500 restaurants in the United States. It is currently the sixth largest restaurant chain in America.

Some 6,500 branches are operating in other countries like Canada, Aruba, Dominican Republic, Chile, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Puerto Rico, and Ecuador. It has also expanded to Asia and Europe.

UNIVERSE
TACO BELL
INTERNATIONAL 200

TACO Bell restaurant general manager Herman Villalobos, Bb. Pilipinas Universe 2004 Maricar Balagtas, Taco Bell area coach Sol Valdez, Mexican Ambassador Enrique Hubbard Urrea, Araneta Group chair Jorge Araneta, Yum Brand Inc. managing director Art Rautio, and Bb. Pilipinas International Margaret Ann Bayot.

BACOLOD'S NEW ARRIVALS
Robinson's Metro Bacolod welcomed Shakey's new branch and its new mascot, the Pizza Man. Celebrating the event are (from left) Kitchie Benedicto, Bacolod City Mayor Bing Leonardia and La Carlota (Negros Occidental) Mayor Jeffrey Ferrer and his wife, lawyer Juliet Ferrer. For those who prefer staying home, a Shakey's meal is just a phone call away, 5338000.

'Log' on to these Christmas cakes

TO MARK BreadTalk's first Christmas in Manila, holiday items have been added to the usual lineup of favorites.

These include the Chocolate Yule Log, the White Yuletide and Nutty Merriment log cakes. The Chocolate Yule Log consists of multi-layers of chocolate sponge, white chocolate mousse, vanilla sponge and chocolate mousse.

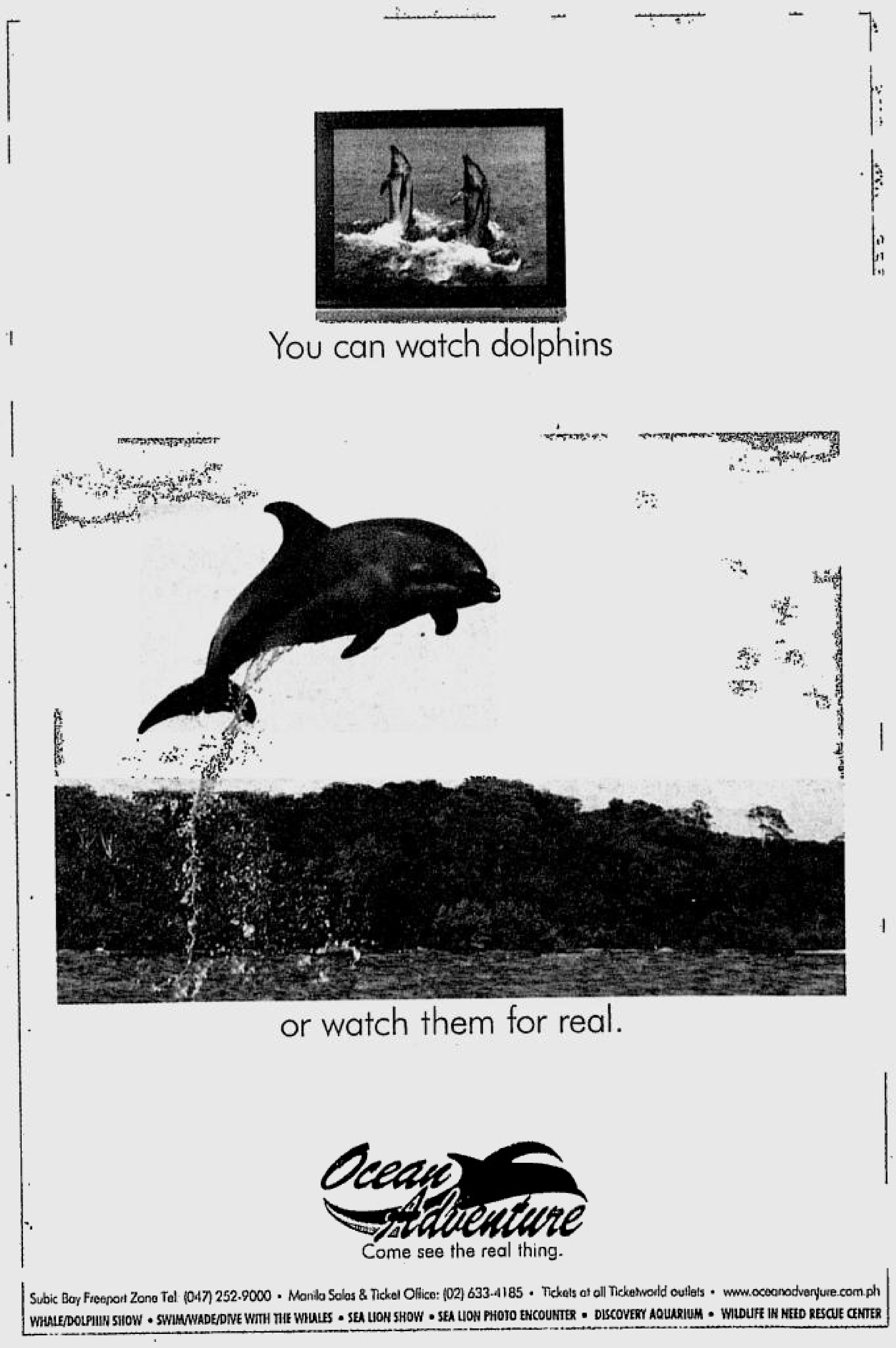
For something lighter, White Yuletide is a fresh mango cream and vanilla sponge cake. The Nutty Merriment is a traditional log of chocolate decadent sponge, white hazelnut cream and hazelnut crunch.

If intended for gifts, each cake has a special box with a Christmas tag.

Aside from log cakes, two special Christmas breads are also available this month: the wreath-shaped Chrismas Donut and the snowman-shaped Frosty. Both are filled with candied fruits and glazed with white chocolate.

BreadTalk is located at Glorietta 4 (tel. 8182232), Rockwell Power Plant Mall (8968227). A new branch will open at the basement of Megamall. Place orders two days in advance.

BREADTALK's Christmas log cakes: The Chocolate Yule Log, The White Yuletide, and Nutty Merriment



Subic Bay Freeport Zone Tel: (047) 252-9000 • Manila Sales & Ticket Office: (02) 633-4185 • Tickets at all Ticketworld outlets • www.oceanadventure.com.ph
WHALE/DOLPHIN SHOW • SWIM/WADE/DIVE WITH THE WHALES • SEA LION SHOW • SEA LION PHOTO ENCOUNTER • DISCOVERY AQUARIUM • WILDLIFE IN NEED RESCUE CENTER

Bunches of goodness

CALIFORNIA grapes, bagel and coffee combo makes for a great healthy snack.

THE STEADILY increasing focus on healthy living among today's smart-set gives quality-grown grapes a greater importance as a holiday staple.

California Grapes, naturally sweet and enjoyable to eat, are natural healthy snacks with first-rate health benefits. They contain highly cardio-protective polyphenols that are disease-fighting phytonutrients. Polyphenols are effective antioxidants that protect the heart and blood vessels against oxidative tissue damage.

This is especially valuable during Christmas time when excessive eating and drinking are the order of the day.

As the name suggests, fresh California Grapes come from the ideal farming regions in the state of California, and we get our share from a third of the total production that is exported.

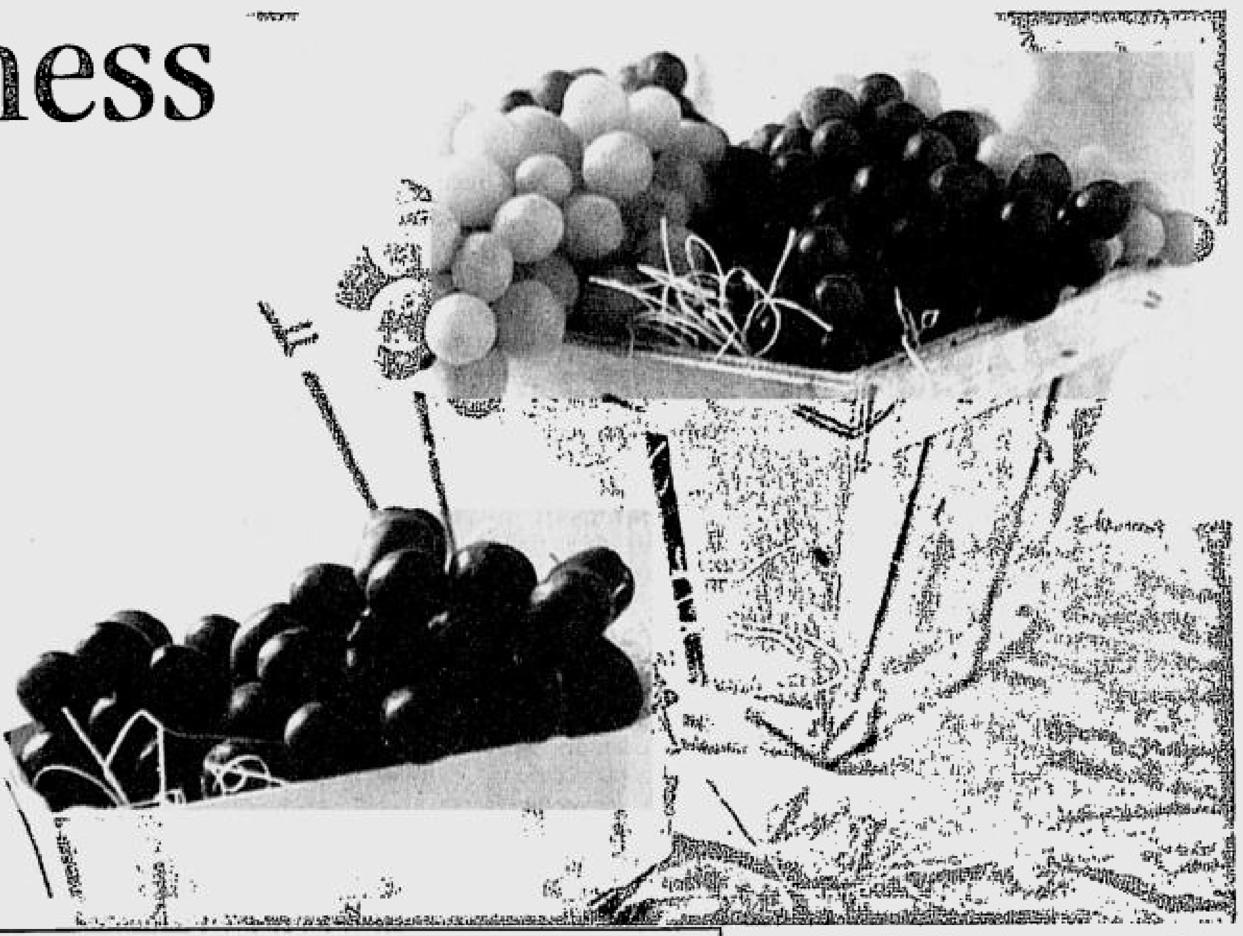
Grapes were first cultivated in the Caucasus region 6,000 years before the birth of Christ. Sea-faring Phoenicians spread the grape-culture to Greece by 2,000 BC, from where it reached Europe and Africa. Quickly, Eastern Europe and Britain caught the grape-habit by way of its trade routes passing through Spain, Portugal and France.

Interestingly, it was the spread of Catholicism that brought the grape, and viticulture as a whole, to California. Spanish Franciscans needed to cultivate the fruit to produce wine for use in Holy Mass.

It is only appropriate that we now enjoy fresh California Grapes during Christmas, the happiest of Christian festivals.

This year, enjoy fresh California grapes as the flavor of the season. They're extremely healthy and just plain.

Grapes are delicious as ingredient in pastries, salads, desserts and entrees, or eaten whole and fresh without frills. They make a practical and fabulous gift this season.



FRESH California grapes are perfect as giveaways this Christmas.

SPARKLING Grape and Berry Jells made up of California seedless grapes and gelatin are healthy options for dessert at your Christmas buffet.

Holiday feasts

EDSA Shangri-La Manila presents mouthwatering feasts. Enjoy a buffet of Nishiki's Japanese specialties for dinner Dec. 24-25 and 31 and lunch on Christmas and New Year's Day. Paparazzi offers a set dinner of Italian dishes until Dec. 25 and then Jan. 1. Feast on Summer Palace's Cantonese lunch and dinner set menus for 10 persons Dec. 24-25 and 31, and Jan. 1. Garden Cafe features *bibingka* and *puto bumbong* and breakfast buffet for those attending the *Misa de Gallo*. Call 6347373/6338888.

THE WESTIN Philippine Plaza offers The Longest Buffet Dec. 24-25 and 31. Feast on international specialties at Cafe Plaza, Alfiere and China Sea. Savor *bibingka* and *puto bumbong* at Cafe Plaza until Dec. 25. A set Christmas dinner of classic Italian fare awaits diners Dec. 24-25. Cantonese cuisine is featured at China Sea Restaurant Dec. 24-25 and 31, and Jan. 1. It's a barbecue cookout on Dec. 31. Call 5515555.

HOLIDAY Inn Galleria Manila offers freshly baked puto bumbong and bibingka, Christmas goodies and Holiday Chill drink the whole month of December. Special buffet meals are prepared as well for the hotel's Christmas Eve dinner, Christmas Day lunch, New Year's Eve dinner and New Year's Day lunch at Raphael Cafe-Restaurant. Also, drink all you can wine and beer while welcoming the New Year with a countdown party at Monet Bar-Lounge. Call 6337111.

THE HERITAGE Hotel's Restaurant Riviera offers Roast Prime Beef Ribs, Sugar Glaze Ham, Roast Rib Eye, Roast Rack of Lamb with Mint Sauce, Baked Beef Wellington, Chicken Marengo, Raspberry Flan Tart, Tiramisu and English Fruitcake. Call 8548888.

MANILA Pavilion Hotel's Goodie Counter offers cakes, cookies, pralines, gingerbread and hampers until Dec. 31. Bibingka, puto bumbong, ginger or herbal tea are also available until Dec. 31 at the Lobby. At Cafe Coquilla, families will enjoy the Christmas Eve dinner buffet on Dec. 24, 6-11 p.m.; Christmas Day brunch, Dec. 25, 10:30 a.m.-3 p.m.; New Year's Eve buffet, Dec. 31, 6-11 p.m.; and New Year's Day brunch, Jan. 1, 10:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Call 5261212.

HYATT Regency Manila's Cafe Al Fresco presents a holiday spread of Roasted Baby Turkey with Cranberry Chutney, seafood station with Baked Atlantic Snapper, oysters, Steamed King Prawns, Flower Crabs and salmon on Dec. 24. A Christmas Day Brunch and Lunch and Christmas Eve Buffet will also be held. Call 8331234.

MAKATI Shangri-La's Inagiku presents Grilled Hamachi Head Shioyaki, Hamachi Teriyaki, Buri Daikon and Hamachi Sashimi.

Call 8138888.

Double the delight this holiday season

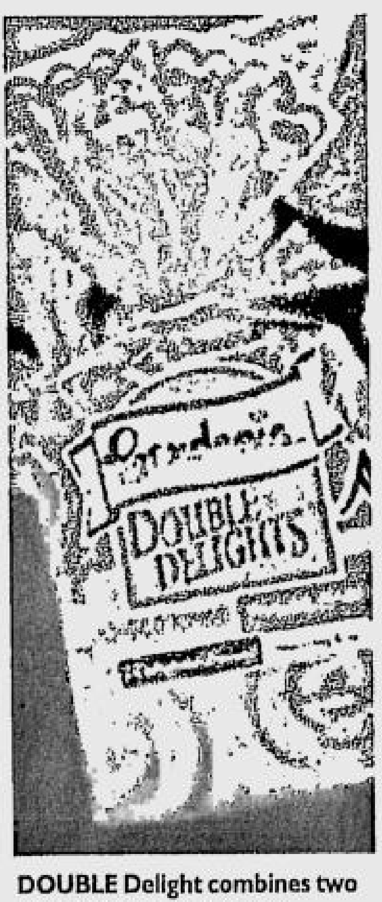
DOUBLE your guests' enjoyment this holiday season with Gardenia's Double Delights.

The latest innovation in bread combines two distinct flavors in one loaf. The Ubelicious and Cheesy twirl combination features the tastes of *ube* and cheese. Chocolate lovers can opt for Choco Ripple and Mocha Marble that combines rich chocolate and mocha.

Gardenia uses only the freshest ingredients for its breads. It is the only bread maker to receive the Superbrands status in the Philippines this year.

In 2003, the company received the ISO (International Organization for Standardization) 9001:2000 and HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) Certifications.

ISO certification attests to quality of entire production process and products, while the HACCP accreditation assures consumers that Gardenia breads are safe to eat and produced in a hygienic, and chemical- and pest-free environment.



DOUBLE Delight combines two distinct flavors in one loaf.

Add a super gift box to your party fare

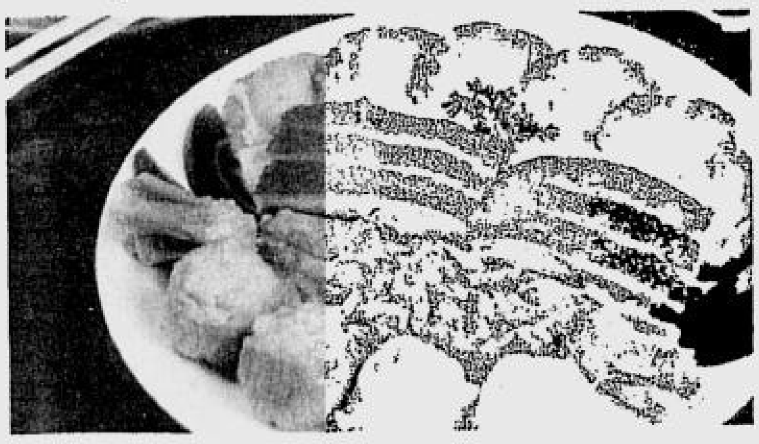
SUPER Bowl of China offers the Super Gift Box containing a 2.75-3 kilos whole suckling pig complete with hoisin sauce or a 1.75-kilos whole roast duck with plum sauce.

The suckling pig or roast duck, two of the most popular dishes from Super Bowl of China, is sure to be a welcome addition to any Christmas party, reunions, homecoming and special family meals.

Call Super Bowl of China at 7472845 or 7472048. Order should be placed at least two days in advance.

Super Bowl of China branches are at the Megastrip of SM Megamall; Jupiter Street in Bel-Air, Makati City; Glorietta 4 in Ayala Center; Chefs Avenue in Festival Mall, Alabang; 2nd level, SM City North Edsa; Eastwood City Walk 2 in Libis; and ground floor, SM Fairview. Ssoon to open is Super Bowl of China in Greenhills, San Juan.

Visit www.superbowl.com.ph.



Special blends for holiday drinks

STARBUCKS holiday beverages are back for a limited time.

Traditional Starbucks holiday beverages include rich, creamy Toffee Nut Latte and Toffee Nut Frappuccino; and Peppermint Mocha and Peppermint Mocha Frappuccino, chocolate with a kiss of mint.

Toffee Nut Latte is made of smooth espresso, creamy steamed milk, highlighted with toffee nut syrup and topped with whipped cream and toffee sprinkles. Those who like their beverage cold can opt for Toffee Nut Frappuccino, Starbucks coffee blended with ice and toffee nut syrup and topped with whipped cream, then finished with toffee sprinkles.

Customers can also have Iced Toffee Nut Latte—smooth espresso, fresh milk, toffee nut syrup then topped with whipped cream and toffee sprinkles.

Starbucks Peppermint Mocha is made of smooth espresso, steamed milk, rich chocolate, and peppermint syrup and topped with whipped cream and red sugar sprinkles.

The Peppermint Mocha Frappuccino blends Starbucks coffee with ice, mocha syrup, peppermint syrup, topped with whipped cream and red sugar sprinkles.

Non-coffee drinkers can go for Starbucks' Peppermint Hot Chocolate. It can go well with traditional Filipino holiday fare like *bibingka* and *puto bumbong*.

STARBUCKS COFFEE

THE PERFECT reward after a day of holiday shopping, Iced Peppermint Mocha is a refreshing blend of Starbucks' special espresso, topped with whipped cream and red sugar sprinkles.

ENTERTAINMENT Metro
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Vic realistic about 'Enteng' prospects

By Marinel R. Cruz

WITH G Toengi as Ina Magenta, who is made to go to a cosmetic surgeon to justify her youthful looks

"WE'RE hoping for a box-office hit," said director Tony Reyes of "Enteng Kabisote," his movie in the Metro Manila Film Festival. "We're also eyeing to take home some of the awards for production design and special effects, as well as for the best float."

But actor-producer Vic Sotto is more realistic than optimistic. "I don't think this would earn as much as 'Lastikman' did in 2002 because I will be competing with seven other films," he said.

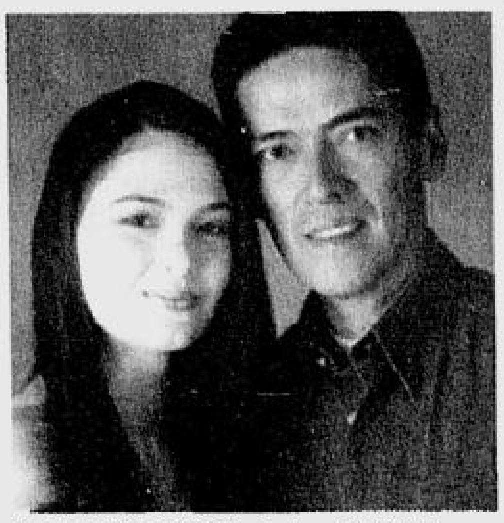
"We've done everything we could to Lastikman," said the comedian and television host, who first brought the Mars Ravelo character "Lastikman" to the big screen in 2002. "I don't see how we could make its Part Two any better. Now we want people to see something different."

OctoArts Films and Vic's own production outfit, M-Zet Films, had wanted to do a sequel to "Lastikman," the 2002 Metro Manila Film Festival top-grosser, but negotiations with Ravelo's family broke down. The Ravelos had asked for P2 million and co-ownership of the movie's radio, TV and cable rights, OctoArts president Orly Ilacad said in a previous interview.

"The price was astronomical and unreasonable," Ilacad had said. "We merely adapted the name of the character but the story is ours."

Because OctoArts failed to win the right to produce the sequel, it changed its entry in the 2003 MMFF to "Fantastikman."

For this year's festival, Viva Films is producing "Lastikman" instead.



STAR-PRODUCER Vic Sotto with Kristine Hermosa as his wife Faye Kabisote

But Vic said, "*Ayaw na namin ng* superheroes. We still wanted to do a family movie. While we were brainstorming, I suggested that we do a remake of 'Okay Ka Fairy Ko' instead. They liked the idea so we started working on the movie last February."

He was referring to Tony Reyes' fantasy, "Enteng Kabisote: Okay Ka Fairy Ko ... The Legend," one of the eight official entries in the Metro Manila Film Festival.

Ahead of its time

"Okay Ka Fairy Ko" was on TV for 10 years and was made into a movie in 1990, when it became that year's top-grosser. A sequel was shown in 1992.

"Today, 13 years later, we are bringing it back," said Vic.

OctoArts spent some P35 million to make "Enteng Kabisote: Okay Ka Fairy Ko ... The Legend," according to Vic. P7 million of the budget was spent on special effects alone, he added.

"That's what 'Okay Ka' was known for," he pointed out. "The show had been using special effects even before special effects became a regular thing on TV."

Playing Faye Kabisote, Enteng's wife, is Kristine Hermosa. G Toengi takes over the role of Ina Magenta, a character that the late actress Charito Solis popularized in the late 1980s.

"We couldn't think of anyone who could replace Charito Solis, so *pinabata namin si* Ina Magenta," Vic explained. "We made her go to a plastic surgeon in Enkantasya.

"We made the right decision when we picked G. She created her own Ina Magenta and she was very convincing," he added.

Realistic

"Everyone did their best, so did I," said G Toengi.

Also in the cast playing are Aiza Seguerra and Oyo Boy Sotto as the Kabisote children, Bing Loyzaga as Satana, Michael V as Itim, Nadine Samonte as Tanny, Jeffrey Quizon as Romero, January Isaac as Malikmata and Ruby Rodriguez as Amy.

The eight entries will be shown simultaneously from Dec. 25 to Jan. 9. The awards night will be on Dec. 29 at the Aliw Theater in Pasay City.

"But we worked really hard to make this film," Vic stressed. "I hope it would at least help uplift the local movie industry. This is not your usual movie with special effects. Super-*linis* ito."

The legendary Eddie Garcia is back in 'Mano Po'

VERY few stars reach the legendary status that actor and director Eddie Garcia has achieved.

Eddie started in show business around the 1950s and still remains very active in movies and television today. He will be seen on the big screen again in "Mano Po 3, My Love," MAQ Productions' official entry in the 2004 Metro Manila Film Festival-Philippines (MMFF-P).

"Mano Po 3" reunites him with Vilma Santos and Christopher de Leon, both of whom he directed in the 1989 film fest movie, "Imortal," as well as in "Sinasamba Kita" and "Paano ba ang Mangarap."

In "Mano Po 1," Eddie was father to the characters played by Maricel Soriano, Kris Aquino, Ara Mina and others. His portrayal of a Filipino-Chinese patriarch earned for him a Best Actor award from the MMFF in 2002.

In "Mano Po 3, My Love," Eddie plays Xiao Shou, also called Melencio Chiong, the foster father of Lilia (Vilma Santos). Melencio is calm, strong, sometimes humorous. His love for his daughter is steadfast, from the beginning when Lilia is given to him and especially during the moment when Lilia is faced with a great personal crisis.

On- and off-camera, Eddie is known as a very disciplined man. He always makes it a point to wake up early, for instance. When the staff of MAQ Productions was making the room assignments for the "Mano Po 3" cast during their Beijing trip, Eddie was appointed the roommate of self-confessed sleepyhead Jay Manalo. The ploy worked: Jay made sure he was prompt for all the early-morning wake-up calls.

"Mano Po 3, My Love" stars Boots Anson-Roa, Sheryl Cruz, Patrick Garcia, Angelica Panganiban, Angel Locsin, Carlo Aquino, John Prats, Karylle and Dennis Trillo. It is supported by Globe Telecom, Philam Life Insurance, Dunkin Donuts, Dream Cable, Love Radio, Yes! FM 101.1, Kissa, I-Manila and Mercury Drug.

It opens in theaters on Dec. 25.

THE GREAT Garcia (right, back row) is joined by co-stars (counterclockwise, from his right), his Beijing roommate Jay Manalo, Christopher de Leon, Boots Anson-Roa, Carlo Aquino, Patrick Garcia, Angelica Panganiban, Angel Locsin, producer Mother Lily Monteverde, Karylle, Dennis Trillo, Sheryl Cruz, Vilma Santos and John Prats (partly hidden).

"SIGAW" stars (from left) Iza Calzado, Jomari Yllana, child star Ella Guevara, Angel Locsin and Richard Gutierrez

The horror, the horror!

CHRISTMAS always brings two kinds of chills in the Philippines: the balmy weather that makes people bundle up in layers of clothing, and the horror movies that are a staple in the yearend Metro Manila Film Festival.

The festival, which opens on Christmas Day, is never complete without a horror film. This Christmas, one of them is "Sigaw."

Line-produced by Regal Entertainment for Megavision Films, "Sigaw" stars Richard Gutierrez and Angel Locsin, Iza Calzado, James Blanco, Ella Guevara and Jomari Yllana in a tale about the residents of a creepy apartment building in downtown Manila.

"Sigaw," written by Roy Iglesias and directed by Yam Laranas, boasts of impressive performances by an ensemble cast, meticulous production design, a Dolby Digital 5.1 soundtrack, as well as a story full of shocking revelations and twists.

The new horror movie is yet another thriller from Mother Lily Monteverde, who also produced the "Shake, Rattle and Roll" series and "Bahay ni Lola" which were among the biggest hits in past Metro Manila film festivals.

"Bahay ni Lola" was a surprise hit in the 2001 film fest. The modestly-budgeted movie which starred Aiza Seguerra, Gina Alajar and Gloria Romero beat much bigger productions such as "Yamashita, The Tiger's Treasure" and "Bagong Buwan."

Prior to the boom in Asian horror movies which started this year, Filipino filmmakers had been making horror movies especially intended for the MMFF.

"I watched them when I was a little girl," says Iza, referring to the "Shake, Rattle and Roll" movies. "After watching them, *nag-iba na ang tingin ko sa aparador namin, sa* family computer! I got chills up my spine!"

"Sigaw" is said to be scarier, partly because of the main location itself, an eerie, abandoned theater building in the heart of Manila.

Says director Laranas, "My hair really stood on end whenever I went in through the second floor. I would walk fast! It was the darkest part of the building and I felt like someone was always watching me even when there was no one else there."

So why do Filipinos love to be scared during the holidays? Whatever the reason is, "Sigaw" will help satisfy this guilty pleasure.

"Sigaw" opens on Dec. 25. It is supported by Globe Telecom, Yes! FM 101.1, Love Radio, Mercury Drug and I-Manila. Log on to the film's website, www.regal-sigaw.com.

SM CINEMA movietime

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The 30th Metro Manila Film Festival 2004

Opens Dec. 25 at all SM Cinema

OPENS THIS WEEK

BAD SANTA
SUBJECT TO MTRCB RATING

This is the story of two criminals who disguise themselves as Santa Claus (Thornton) and his elf, traveling across the country to major malls, using the good will people have towards Santa to rob the stores blind. The plan is going great until the two baddies meet an introverted 8-year-old boy who reminds them of the true meaning of Christmas.

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HAROLD AND KUMAR
SUBJECT TO MTRCB RATING

Two likeable underdogs (John Cho & Kal Penn) for whom things never seem to go right, set out on a Friday night quest to satisfy their craving for White Castle hamburgers and end up on an epic journey of deep thoughts and deeper inhaling.

Now Showing at:
SM Manila • North Edsa • Megamall • Sta. Mesa • Southmall • Tutuban

HONEY
SUBJECT TO MTRCB RATING

This is the story of Honey (Alba), a tough sexy dancer from the inner city, who becomes a successful music video choreographer, a career which is threatened when her mentor makes her either sleep with him... or get blacklisted within the industry. She ultimately decides to pursue her lifelong dream of opening her own dance studio for inner-city youths

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SM Manila • North Edsa • Megamall • Sta. Mesa • Southmall • Tutuban

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DURING FRIDAYS AND SATURDAYS

1 BRIDGET JONES 2
2 THE INCREDIBLES

METRO MANILA

sm megamall
1 POLAR EXPRESS
2 ALEXANDER
3 NATIONAL TREASURE
4 HAROLD AND KUMAR
5 BAD SANTA
6 BUNNYGUARDS
7 HELLWOLF
8 PASIYAM
9 HONEY
10 2046
11 BRIDGET JONES 2
12 BIRTH

sm city fairview
1 BIRTH
2 BCUZ OF U
3 HAROLD AND KUMAR
4 ALEXANDER
5 BAD SANTA
6 PASIYAM
7 ONE MISSED CALL
8 NATIONAL TREASURE
9 HELLWOLF
10 NED KELLY
11 AFTER THE SUNSET
12 SHREK/ SHARKTALE

sm city manila
HONEY
HAROLD AND KUMAR
3 POLAR EXPRESS
4 ALEXANDER
BAD SANTA
6 NATIONAL TREASURE
7 BUNNYGUARDS
8 ONE MISSED CALL
9 PASIYAM
10 BCUZ OF U
11 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
12 BRIDGET JONES 2

sm city sta. mesa
1 PASIYAM
2 BIRTH
3 ALEXANDER
4 HAROLD AND KUMAR
5 NATIONAL TREASURE
6 ONE MISSED CALL
7 BAD SANTA
8 NED KELLY
9 HONEY
10 BCUZ OF U

sm city southmall
1 BAD SANTA
2 HONEY
3 NATIONAL TREASURE
4 HAROLD AND KUMAR
5 BIRTH
6 NED KELLY
7 PASIYAM
8 ALEXANDER
9 BCUZ OF U
10 ONE MISSED CALL

sm city north edsa
1 ALEXANDER
2 BAD SANTA
3 PASIYAM
4 BIRTH
5 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
6 HAROLD AND KUMAR
7 NATIONAL TREASURE
8 HONEY

sm cinema tutuban
1 HONEY
2 HAROLD AND KUMAR
3 PASIYAM
4 SHREK/ SHARKTALE

sm supercenter sucat
1 BAD SANTA
2 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
3 NATIONAL TREASURE
4 BRIDGET JONES 2

sm city bicutan
1 GEORGE AND THE
2 DRAGON
3 BRIDGET JONES 2
4 BAD SANTA
NATIONAL TREASURE

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THE BUNNYGUARDS

NOW SHOWING
SM CITY MANILA
SM MEGAMALL

MTRCB Rating: G

SM Cinema unleashes Washington's scandal of the century. Through his connections to the underworld and for a huge amount of money, a Hamburg publisher succeeds in getting his hands on a tape with a recording of a secret and intimate conversation between the President and his intern. However, just prior to the big press conference, the revealing tape is accidentally exchanged with his daughter Nina's Japanese lessons tape who, unknowingly, flies with the evidence to her friend's in Munich. As soon as her father realizes what has happened, he tries to get the best bodyguards money can buy to protect her. However, thanks to the efforts of the German Secret Service and the CIA, both of which are eager to get their hands on the tape, Nina ends up with the two biggest goofs in town: Erkan and Stefan.

Catch The Bunnyguards only here at SM Cinemas! Watch how Erkan and Stefan get to be heroes for a day! See fantastic, unforgettable movies, critics are raving about only here at SM Cinemas!

SOPRANO Rachelle Gerodias (on video wall) performs with the UST Symphony Band, Koro Tomasino and UST Liturgikon.

UST Christmas show on ABC-5

SHOW TIME

THE ACCLAIMED grand Christmas concert of the University of Santo Tomas, dubbed "Himig Pasko Sa UST! (Gift of the Thomasians)," will be aired as a Christmas special on Friday, Dec. 23, at 4:30 to 6 p.m. on ABC 5.

The concert, mounted last Dec. 5 at the UST Chàpel (Santissimo Rosario parish church), has been praised by critics, audiences and diplomats. It featured hundreds of performers from all over the Pontifical University, particularly from the UST Conservatory of Music.

The concert featured blissful renditions by the UST Grade School Choir, Coro Tomasino, Liturgikon Vocal Ensemble, and the world-renowned UST Singers.

Heartwarming musical pieces were also performed by the UST Symphony Orchestra, UST Guitar Ensemble, and UST Brass Band, and jazz pieces by the UST Symphony Band.

Songs were sung by the UST Voice Faculty Ensemble and famous soprano Rachelle Gerodias.

There were also performances by the Salinggawi Dance Group, champion of the UAAP cheer-dance contest, as well as special performances by acclaimed composer Fr. Manuel Maramba, O.S.B. and highly praised pianist Dr. Raul Sunico, who is also dean of the UST Conservatory.

The concert took place amid the Yuletide ambience of the huge but homely campus of the 393-year-old UST, Asia's oldest university.

New audition for Asian theme park performers set in January

THE SECOND audition for performers in a new theme park in Asia will be held in January in search of singers for both indoor and outdoor locations and in various stage shows and atmosphere groups in the new property.

Professional vocalists at least 18 years old and possessing excellent musicianship and showmanship are invited to the preliminary screening on Jan. 15 at the rehearsal hall of The San Miguel Foundation for the Performing Arts. All applicants will be required to sing unaccompanied excerpts, preferably from any animated feature film.

Vocalists should prepare two English songs of contrasting styles. Singers who pass the preliminary screening will audition in front of an international casting team on Jan. 23.

An accompanist will be provided at the audition.

Applicants, however, must provide sheet music in the correct key.

Audition enrollment forms are available at the SMFPA offices at the basement level of the San Miguel Corp. head office complex behind SM Megamall along San Miguel Avenue in Mandaluyong City.

Please bring a recent 2"x2" full-color photo and a detailed resumé.

Deadline for application is on Jan. 14, 2005.

Those who went to the first audition are no longer qualified to apply for the new audition.

For more information, call enrollment coordinator Deo Dipasupil, 632-3769. Updates will be posted at www.smfpa.com.

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METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION
MOVIE GUIDE
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Telephone: 633.2227 / 633.7851 loc. 171
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1 (DOLBY) NATIONAL TREASURE GP
2 (DOLBY) BRIDGET JONES PG13
3 (DOLBY) POLAR EXPRESS GP
SHREK 2 GP
4 (DOLBY) ALEXANDER R13

SUPER CINERAMA
isetann
CINERAMA COMPLEX RECTO tel 733.4236
1. (DOLBY) BAD SANTA
2. HONEY
3. RESERVED
4. GEORGE & THE DRAGON
5. SALAT

Gotesco Grand Central
(Caloocan) tel 364.3781
1 RESERVE
2 RESERVE
3 RESERVE
4 (SDDS) RESERVE
5 RESERVE
6 (DOLBY) RESERVE
7 (DTS) RESERVE
8 RESERVE
9 RESERVE

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 KALABIT
2 THE GRUDGE

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 (SDDS) U-BELT
2 KALABIT
3 BABY GENIUSES
4 (DTS) ALEXANDER

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72
1 (DDS) ONE MISSED CALL
2 (SDDS) CHRISTMAS WITH A KRANKS
3 (DTS) HONEY
4 GOLD (DTS) BAD SANTA
5 GOLD (DOLBY) HAROLD & KUMAR
6 GOLD (SDDS) NATIONAL TREASURE
7 GOLD (DOLBY) ALEXANDER
8 BCUZ OF U
9 SEED OF CHUCKY
10 THE INCREDIBLE

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290, 833.3274
1 HONEY
2 NED KELLY
3 KALABIT

MARKETMALL
Mandaluyong tel 533.3851 / 533.3856
1 ALEXANDER
2 BABY GENIUSES
3 KALABIT
4 RESERVED

starmall Movies
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Las Pinas) tel (047) 237.7007
1 (DOLBY) POLAR EXPRESS
2 SANTA SANTITA

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City) tel 687.6963 or 72
1 (DOLBY) THE POLAR EXPRESS
2 (DOLBY) BRIDGET JONES DIARY 2
3 (DOLBY) THE INCREDIBLES
4 (DOLBY) SHREK 2

THE CENTER OF ENTERTAINMENT
Araneta Center
ALIMALL CINEPLEX
Tel 911-3101 loc. 8242 / 8261 / 8397
3 (Dolby) ALEXANDER
4 (SDDS) HAROLD & KUMAR
5 (DTS) BAD SANTA
6 (Dolby) HONEY
7 (Dolby) BCUZ OF U

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1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 SANTA SANTITA
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) NED KELLY
5 SALAT SA LIGAYA

METROPOLIS star
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Alabang) tel 850.4285
1 OUT OF REACH
2 SALAT SA LIGAYA
3 HONEY
4 SANTA SANTITA
5 (DOLBY) ALEXANDER
6 NATIONAL TREASURE

MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

Grand Chinese Circus canceled

THE "Grand Chinese Circus" featuring the internationally-acclaimed Fujian Acrobatic Troupe show in Manila was canceled due to circumstances beyond the control of the promoter. It was supposed to run from Dec. 25 to 28 at the Philippine Sports Multipurpose Arena (formerly Ultra).

Ticket holders can get refunds at all Ticketnet (911-5555) and at Ticketworld (891-9999) outlets at major National Bookstore branches, Robinsons department stores in Ermita, Ortigas, Pampanga and Cavite, Tower Records Makati and Alabang, Music Museum, Ayala Center ticket booths in Greenbelt 1 and Glorietta 1 and all SM department stores.

Roberta Flack to open music school

NEW YORK— R&B singer Roberta Flack plans to transform two abandoned brownstones in Harlem into a school of music to be opened next fall. It will have a permanent faculty of teachers, classrooms, a recording studio, an auditorium and cafe.

Flack has already secured a $1-million investment from Carver Federal Savings Bank and is seeking an additional $2 million in donations and private investments.

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POLAR EXPRESS GP 1:30,3:30,5:30 ALEXANDER R13 7:15,10:10	NATIONAL TREASURE GP 12:10,2:40,5:10,7:40,10:10	BRIDGET JONES PG13 12:40,3:00,5:20,7:40,10:00
HAROLD AND KUMAR R13 1:20,3:30,5:40,7:50,10:00	SHARK TALE GP 12:30,5:00,9:30 INCREDIBLES GP 2:30,7:00	BAD SANTA R13 1:25,3:35,5:45,7:55,10:05

MATINEE SCREENINGS BEFORE 5:00 P.M. - P80.00 - MON. - FRI.

star group of cinemas movie guide

IN DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND

starmall EDSA-SHAW
Tel. No. 726.61.50

3 Santa Santita
4 Ned Kelly
5 Salat sa Ligaya

METROPOLIS ALABANG star
Tel. No. 850.42.85

1 Out of Reach
2 Salat sa Ligaya
3 Honey
4 Santa Santita
5 Alexander
6 National Treasure

starmall LAS PIÑAS
Tel. No. 873.50.04

1 Polar Express
2 Santa Santita

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1 THE POLAR EXPRESS
12:35, 3:05, 5:35
8:05, 10:35
GP

2 BRIDGET JONES DIARY 2
10:30, 12:50, 3:20,
5:50, 8:20, 10:50
PG-13

3 THE INCREDIBLES
11:20, 2:05, 4:50,
7:35, 10:30
GP

4 HAROLD & KUMAR
11:50, 2:30, 5:10
7:50, 10,30
R-13

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CINEMA 1 **BAD SANTA**
11:10, 1:20, 3:30, 5:40, 7:50, 10:10
P13

CINEMA 2 **HAROLD & KUMAR**
12:15, 2:25, 4:35, 6:45, 8:55
R13

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1 NATIONAL TREASURE
FS 11 20AM 2 00PM 4 40PM
7 20PM, LMF 10 00PM (GP)

2 BRIDGET JONES (EDGE OF REASON)
FS 11 45AM 2 15PM 4 45PM
7 15PM, LMF 9 45PM (PG-13)

3 POLAR EXPRESS
FS 11 30AM, 4.30PM, LMF 9 30PM (GP)
SHREK 2
FS 2 00PM LMF 7.00PM (GP)

4 ALEXANDER
FS 12 15PM 3 30PM 6 45PM
LMF 10 00PM (R-13)

PREMIERE THEATRE — THE INCREDIBLES (GP)
FS 7 00 PM, LMF 9 30PM

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3	ALEXANDER 12:30 3:30 6:30 9:30
4	BRIDGET JONES 1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00

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ALI MALL CINEMAS

3	Dolby	ALEXANDER 12 00 2.50 5:40 8:30
4	SDDS	HAROLD & KUMAR 1:00 3:40 6 20 9:00
5	dts	BAD SANTA 12:15 2.25 4.35 6:45 8.55
6	Dolby	HONEY 12:15 2:25 4 35 6:45 8:55
7	Dolby	BCUZ OF U 12 00 2:10 4 20 6 30 8:40

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Dec. 25	Sat	1pm 4:30pm 8pm
Dec. 26	Sun	2pm 6pm
Dec. 27	Mon	2pm 6pm
Dec. 28	Tue	6pm
Dec. 29	Wed	2pm 6pm
Dec. 30	Thu	2pm 6pm
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Jan. 2	Sun	2pm 6pm
Jan. 3	Mon	6pm

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MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	SEX BOMB / RAMPADORA
ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY [illegible]
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	SALAT SA LIGAYA
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR
NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
A	SALAT SA LIGAYA
B	CLOSED
C	
MANDALUYONG CITY	
SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA 1 2 3 & 4	NATIONAL TREASURE / BRIDGET JONES / SPIDERMAN 2 / SHREK 2
PREMIERE THEATRE	THE INCREDIBLES
CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	KALABIT
CINEMA-2	SALAT
CINEMA-3	ONE MISSED CALL
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	POLAR EXPRESS
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-6	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-7	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-8	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	HAROLD & KUMAR
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	ALEXANDER
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	BAD SANTA
CINEMA-12	NATIONAL TREASURE
CINEMA-14	HONEY
CINEMA-15	BCUZ OF U
LORES	
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN	
(LAS PINAS)	NATIONAL TREASURE
CINEMA-1	PASIYAM
CINEMA-2	BRIDGET JONES
CINEMA-4	[illegible]
UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

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• METRO MANILA CINEMAS •

GALLERIA	632-9115/16
1 ALEXANDER • THX 11:30 3:00 6:30 10:00	6 NATIONAL TREASURE 11:00 1.45 4:30 7:15 10:00
2 HAROLD AND KUMAR 11:10 1:20 3:30 5:40 7:50 10:00	7 SEED OF CHUCKY 11:00 1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:50
3 NED KELLY 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10.00	8 HONEY 11:10 1:20 3:30 5:40 7:50 10:00
4 BRIDGET JONES 2 12:10 2:40 5:10 7:40 10:00	9 BAD SANTA 11:35 1:40 3:45 5:50 7:55 10:00
5 BIRTH 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00	10 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

ERMITA	536-7809 to 12
1 NATIONAL TREASURE	10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
2 BAD SANTA 10:15 12:15 2:15 4:20 6:25 6:30 10:00	5 SEED OF CHUCKY 10:30 12:25 2:20 4:15 8:05 10:00
3 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON 10:15 12:15 2:15 4 20 6:25 8:30 10:00	6 HONEY 11.10 1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:50
4 PA-SIYAM 10:35 12:50 3:05 5:20 7:35 9:50	7 HAROLD AND KUMAR 10:20 12.15 2:10 4:05 6:00 7:55 9:50

METRO EAST	682-8193/99 · 682-8280
1 SEED OF CHUCKY 10:50 12:50 2.50 4.50 6:50 9:00	5 HONEY 11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:10
2 ALEXANDER 12:30 3:30 6:30 9:30	6 NATIONAL TREASURE 12:20 3:15 6:10 9:05
3 SHREK 2 11:50 1:45 BRIDGET JONES 2 3:55 6:25 9:00	7 HAROLD AND KUMAR 11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9.10
4 THE POLAR EXPRESS 10:50 12:50 2:50 2046 4:50 7:05 9 20	8 BAD SANTA 11:10 1:40 4 10 6:40 9:10

NOVALICHES	935-3229/31
1 ALEXANDER 10:40 1:50 5:00 8:15	5 NANG NAK 11.00 1 00 3.00 5:00 7:00 8:55
2 NATIONAL TREASURE 10 30 1.00 3.30 6:00 8:30	6 SHREK 2 11:00 1:00 3:00 5:00 6:50 8:30
3 BIRTH 11:00 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 8:55	7 SEED OF CHUCKY 11:00 1.00 3.00 5.00 7.00 8:55
4 THE POLAR EXPRESS 10:30 12:30 2:30 2046 4:35 6.50 9.00	8 THE INCREDIBLES 11:00 1:10 ONE MISSED CALL 3:30 5:50 8:30

What's Happening

METRO MANILA

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PIONEER	687-5378
1 ALEXANDER 11 00 2:20 5:40 9:00	3 NATIONAL TREASURE 12:40 3:20 6:00 8:40
2 THE INCREDIBLES 11 10 1:30 3:50 6:10 8.30	4 BAD SANTA 10.35 12:40 2:45 4:50 6:55 9.00

Citisquare MALABON	288-0985 / 2575
1 BCUZ OF U 11:10 1:30 3:50 6:10 8:30	3 ALEXANDER 11:00 2:10 5.20 8:30
2 NATIONAL TREASURE 10:30 1:15 3:40 6:05 8:30	4 THE POLAR EXPRESS 11 45 1.55 4.05 6:15 8:30

CAINTA	240-4661
1 ALEXANDER 11:00 2 00 5.00 8:00	3 HONEY 11.00 1:20 3.40 6:00 8:20
2 HAROLD AND KUMAR 11:00 1:20 3:40 6 00 8:20	4 NATIONAL TREASURE 11.15 2:10 5:05 8:00

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'Baretta' killed wife when he couldn't hire a hit man, prosecutors say

SHOW STOPPER

LOS ANGELES—Tough guy actor Robert Blake was so obsessed with getting his infant daughter away from her con woman mother, Bonny Lee Bakley, that he murdered Bakley when he could not find someone else to kill her, prosecutors said on Monday.

But Blake's defense lawyer, Gerald Schwartzbach, countered that there was no evidence that the 71-year-old former star of the "Baretta" television series shot his wife. Blake said the two chief witnesses against him were drug addicts who suffered hallucinations and cooperated with authorities to avoid prosecution themselves.

In her opening statement, prosecutor Shellie Samuels painted Blake as a man who so hated and despised his 44-year-old wife that he tried to have her abort his child, and then, after the birth, embarked on schemes to have her arrested or killed.

"This was not a marriage made in heaven," Samuels said as she described how Blake solicited two stuntmen to kill Bakley and dispatched his best friend to her home in Arkansas to plant drugs on her.

The actor sat with a near-vacant expression as Samuels described for the jury of seven men and five women how Blake allegedly murdered his wife on May 4, 2001, as she sat alone in a car on a dark street.

The couple had eaten dinner in an Italian restaurant, where Samuels said patrons witnessed Blake looking agitated and highly nervous and even vomiting.

After dinner, she said, Blake went to the car and shot Bakley twice in the head and tried to cover up the crime by pretending he had returned to the restaurant to retrieve a gun he had left behind.

BLAKE

Getting away with it

But the prosecutor said Blake flubbed his alibi.

"What the defendant found out was that shooting somebody in real life was a whole lot more traumatic than in the movies," the prosecutor said. "He was not able to compose himself. No one could recall him going back to the restaurant."

Samuels said one witness, stuntman Ronald Hambleton, would testify that Blake always put himself near the scene of the crime in his plans for Bakley's death. When asked why, Blake allegedly said he was an actor and could get away with it.

Blake faces a charge of murder and two charges of solicitation of murder. He could receive up to life in prison if convicted. Prosecutors are not seeking the death penalty.

Schwartzbach told the jury that neither Hambleton nor fellow witness and stuntman Gary McLarty were creditable since both had drug habits and a history of hallucinations.

In addition, Hambleton refused for seven months to cooperate with police and relented only when he saw a way to help himself against drug charges.

Schwartzbach said Hambleton once fantasized that there were 20 armed men in his house, and McLarty believed that police were tunneling under his house.

The lawyer added, "There is no way that Mr. Blake shot Bonny Lee Bakley. There's no direct evidence. But there's also no circumstantial evidence that he shot Ms Bakley. There is no DNA evidence to link him to the crime."

Samuels said there was proof that Blake hated his wife so much that he escalated his activities against her. First, she said, he tried to snatch the baby. When that failed, he tried to get Bakley arrested for violating her parole on identify theft charges.

When that scheme foundered, he tried the planted drugs, and then, when her teenage son sold them, he tried to hire a hit man, Samuels said.

Worried about a fiasco similar to the O.J. Simpson 1995 murder trial, police spent over a year investigating before charging Blake.

Blake has said publicly he believed Bakley was murdered by one of many men she had wronged in the past. *Reuters*

Grim Jim Carrey film good news at box office

SHOW TIME

LOS ANGELES—Comedian Jim Carrey returned to the top of the North American box office with the grim children's movie "Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events."

But the tidings were not as happy on Sunday for two other new releases, the Adam Sandler film "Spanglish" and Dennis Quaid's remake of "Flight of the Phoenix."

"Lemony Snicket" sold $30.2 million worth of tickets in the three days since opening on Friday, according to estimates provided by its distributor, Paramount Pictures, on Sunday.

The figure was in line with industry expectations, but paled against the $68-million opening of Carrey's last chart-topper, "Bruce Almighty," over the Memorial Day holiday weekend in May 2003.

Last weekend's champion, the all-star crime caper "Ocean's Twelve" (Warner Bros.), slipped to No. 2 with estimated sales of $18.3 million. After 10 days, it has earned $68.7 million vs. $72.3 million at the same time for its 2001 predecessor "Ocean's 11."

"Spanglish" (Columbia) opened at No. 3 with about $9 million, about half of what industry observers had been expecting.

'Flight' crashes

The animated family film "The Polar Express" (Warner Bros.) held steady at No. 4 for a third weekend with $8.6 million. The surprise hit of the holidays, the film has now earned $123.6 million after a slow start.

Wesley Snipes' superhero adaptation "Blade: Trinity" (New Line) fell three places to No. 5 with $6.6 million in its second weekend, a drop of 59 percent. Its total rose to $35.4 million. Both studios are owned by Time Warner Inc.

WHEN DID
YOU
LAST
EAT?

"LEMONY SNICKET" with the orphans Klaus (Liam Aiken), Violet (Emily Browning), and Sunny (Kara Hoffman)

"Flight of the Phoenix" (Fox), meanwhile, crashed at No. 8 with $5.2 million.

In the limited-release world, two awards contenders began their campaigns strongly. Director Martin Scorsese's "The Aviator" (Miramax), starring Leonardo DiCaprio as eccentric billionaire Howard Hughes, grossed about $831,000 from 40 theaters.

Actor/director Clint Eastwood's "Million Dollar Baby" (Warner Bros.) starring Hilary Swank as a plucky boxer, scored almost $178,000 from eight theaters in its first round. Miramax Films is a unit of Walt Disney Co.

Overall sales fell from the year-ago period but were essentially unchanged from last weekend, according to tracking firm Exhibitor Relations. The top 12 movies grossed about $100.3 million, down 25 percent from last year, when "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King" opened at No. 1.

Around for a while

"Lemony Snicket," a dark adventure based on the first three books of the popular children's series by Daniel Handler, stars Carrey as the evil Count Olaf, who must care for three young orphans. The film, budgeted at about $140 million, was directed by Brad Silberling ("City of Angels").

As with recent animated hit "The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie," it was developed by Nickelodeon Movies, the film arm of the Nickelodeon kids cable channel which, like Paramount, is owned by Viacom Inc.

PAZ Vega and Adam Sandler

JIM CARREY as the evil Count Olaf

"Spanglish," from writer/director James L. Brooks ("As Good As It Gets") stars Sandler, Tea Leoni, Cloris Leachman and Spanish actress Paz Vega in a domestic comedy-drama fueled by marital tension. It was budgeted near $80 million.

Industry observers had expected an opening in the mid- to high-teen millions, although Columbia's forecast was in the $8 million-$12 million range, said Rory Bruer, the Sony Corp.-owned studio's president of domestic theatrical distribution. He predicted the movie would "be around for quite a while," as is often the case with Brooks' films.

"Flight of the Phoenix," a remake of the 1965 Jimmy Stewart film, stars Dennis Quaid as the captain of a transport plane that has crashed in the Gobi Desert. The film, budgeted in the mid-$40 million range, was directed by John Moore ("Behind Enemy Lines").

Industry expectations were modest, but Fox had hoped for an opening above $6 million, said Bruce Snyder, president of domestic theatrical distribution at the News Corp.-owned studio. "It's much too early to be disappointed," Snyder added. *Reuters*

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December 22, 2004
Kaibigan Vocal Ensemble
3pm Activity Center • 5pm & 7pm Central Plaza

December 23, 2004
Philippine Symphonic Band
3pm Activity Center • 5pm & 7pm Central Plaza

Classics filmmaker, 80, to receive his very first Oscar

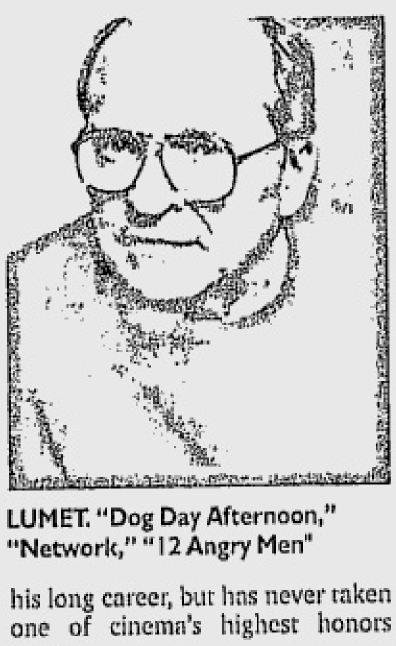
LOS ANGELES—US filmmaker Sidney Lumet, who directed the 1970s classics "Dog Day Afternoon" and "Network," is to receive an honorary Oscar at next year's Academy Awards, organizers said last week.

The special Oscar will be the first that the legendary director, who is now 80, has been awarded in a remarkable career that has spanned more than 50 years and almost as many movies.

The honorary golden statuette will be presented to Lumet at the 77th annual Academy Awards on Feb. 27 in recognition of his "brilliant services to screenwriters, performers and the art of the motion picture."

"Lumet is one of the most important film directors in the history of American cinema," said Frank Pierson, president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which organizes the Oscars.

"His work has left an indelible mark on both audiences and the history of film itself," Pierson said. "It was a great personal pleasure and professional honor to call Sidney to tell him he'd won his profession's highest honor."



LUMET. "Dog Day Afternoon," "Network," "12 Angry Men"

Lumet has been nominated for five Oscars for best director and one for best adapted screenplay during his long career, but has never taken one of cinema's highest honors home.

Lumet was born in Philadelphia in 1927 to an actor father and a dancer mother and made his stage acting debut at New York's Yiddish Art Theater at the age of 4, before turning to television directing in the 1950s.

He is best known for movies such as the 1975 crime thriller "Dog Day Afternoon," starring Al Pacino as a bank robber in what has become a signature role, and 1976's wrenching drama "Network," starring Peter Finch as a TV anchor who loses his mind on the air after being sacked.

Lumet won back-to-back best director Oscar nominations for the films, which marked the high point of his career.

He made his feature film debut in 1957 with the acclaimed movie "12 Angry Men," which earned him an Oscar for directing at the age of 33.

He went on to pick up further Oscar nods "The Verdict" with Paul Newman in 1982, as well as a nomination for the adapted screenplay of "Prince of the City" in 1981.

Lumet's more than 40 films also include another Pacino hit, "Serpico," (1973) "Running on Empty," (1988), the "Wizard of Oz" remake "The Wiz" (1978) with Diana Ross and Michael Jackson and 1977's drama "Equus." He also made "Murder on the Orient Express," (1974) "Fail-Safe," "The Pawnbroker" and a movie version of Eugene O'Neill's classic play, "Long Day's Journey into Night" in 1962.

Last year's recipient of the prestigious honorary Oscar, seen as the Academy's way of making up for past competitive awards oversights involving movie legends, was "Pink Panther" creator Blake Edwards. *AFP*